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The Geography of the Gentrifying 'North American'
Neighbourhood: A Comparison of South Parkdale, Toronto,
Canada, and Lower Park Slope, New York City, USA.

A thesis submitted to the University of London in accordance with the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by
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January 2003

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Abstract

This thesis offers a contribution to the collective academic aim of building a 'geography of gentrification', in the form of a comparative assessment of the gentrifying neighbourhoods of South Parkdale, Toronto, Canada and Lower Park Slope, New York City, USA. Central to this research has been an engagement with two contrasting academic discourses on gentrification, the 'emancipatory city' (a Canadian construct) and the 'revanchist city' (an American construct), to examine how gentrification may or may not have changed since these discourses were produced and articulated. I combine narratives from in-depth interviews (with gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers, community organisers and activists, planners, real estate agents, politicians, landlords and small-business owners) with insights from action research and supplementary data from secondary sources, and elaborate the main similarities and differences in gentrification between these two contexts. I demonstrate that gentrification is neither emancipatory nor revanchist in either case; thus the central argument is that the spatial and temporal context in which gentrification occurs is crucial to its interpretation, and this must be registered if academics are to move on from the intractable theoretical divisions and overgeneralizations which have dominated the gentrification literature in the past. Furthermore, while the similarities observed are very important in how we understand the broad factors behind 'post-recession' gentrification, references to a North American model of the process obscure some subtle local and national differences between the gentrification of individual neighbourhoods within that continent. The thesis therefore demonstrates the need to exercise caution when referring to 'North American gentrification', especially as the geography of gentrification is only in its infancy.

This thesis is written in memory of
Nancy Grace Slater, 1907-1994, who would have been
fascinated;
written for
Mum and Dad, who made it possible;
and written to
Professor David Smith and Dr. Miles Ogborn, who inspired it.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

“It would be hard to argue that, in the net, gentrification has not benefited the cities and in some cities has even reversed decades of residential decline. Yet it remains in a conundrum. For every positive point, there seems to be a counterpoint. Gentrification has brought about neighbourhood stability through greater ownership, but removed rental units from those not in a position to purchase. It has raised inner-city property values and allowed many to notch up their living standard, but priced out others. It has attracted national chains such as Starbucks, Crate and Barrel, Gap, Barnes and Noble, and TGI Friday’s, which have slowly replaced sometimes shabby local coffee houses, thrift and vintage clothing stores, used book shops, and mom and pop bars. While the national chains offer these neighbourhoods products and services appropriate to their new, more upscale residents, such commercial homogenisation may be wiping out the very character that made inner-city neighbourhoods so appealing. All of this is really subjective, though, in that what is viewed as good or bad, positive or negative, will be determined not by hard data on reinvestment or types of goods and services establishments, but largely by people’s ideology, values, and beliefs of what urban neighbourhoods should be” (Kasarda, 1999, p.780).

Inner-city gentrification and the sociospatial implications of neighbourhood change have been a central research theme in several disciplines of urban social science for four decades. The variety of scrutinies, ranging from explanatory accounts to theoretical introspections to ideological confrontations, has generated a large and increasingly diverse literature to which geographers have made a substantial contribution. Hamnett (1991, p.173-4) has suggested five reasons for the intense geographical attention to gentrification:

1. gentrification is a convenient and interesting subject for city-specific research topics and local case studies.
2. gentrification has challenged existing theories of residential location and urban social structure, especially theories of middle-class suburbanisation.
3. gentrification-related displacement of working-class inner-city residents has triggered important urban policy debates over the future of inner-city areas.
4. gentrification is one of the “major ‘leading edges’ of contemporary metropolitan restructuring” (p.174) in many Western cities since the 1970s.
5. gentrification studies reflect the “theoretical and ideological battleground” (p.174) that forms the undercurrent of urban geography, specifically the conflict between liberal humanism and structural Marxism.

It is hardly surprising, given the size of the literature and these very compelling and interconnected reasons for undertaking gentrification research, that a student of urban geography may wonder what areas remain even underexplored, let alone unexplored. I admit that one of the greatest challenges with respect to my research was coming up with an original research proposal, for after reading more or less everything there was to read on the subject, I did worry that I had ‘missed the boat’. Indeed, this thesis does not offer a new theory of gentrification, and I would argue that entirely new theories are unwarranted. What it does advocate, however, is a new *direction* for gentrification research, ‘the geography of gentrification’, together with an empirically validated insistence from research in two places that gentrification is an urgent problem requiring urgent academic attention. I refrain from implying that this new direction is the way forward for all gentrification researchers – I feel that there are rather too many “I would like to see....” and “It is time to....” comments currently appearing in journal articles - but I do think it would be a good idea to advance from the overdrawn theoretical debates and outmoded approaches to gentrification¹ that became a source of considerable frustration to many key figures in the literature (e.g. Clark, 1992; Lees, 1994b, 1998; Bondi, 1999a; Wyly and Hammel, 1999, 2001). I argue that this is a good idea because these debates and approaches are still evident, either explicitly or as pervasive relics of 1980s research, and they obscure some crucial contemporary urban issues raised by gentrification. This is not to advocate a complete detachment from the important epistemological advancements of these debates and approaches, but rather to side with a new direction that is in tune with gentrification as it is happening now, rather than remain entrenched in the ‘agree to disagree’ attitude that had emerged, by the early 1990s, from debates involving leading researchers.

This new direction is also driven by a perplexing irony - geographers are the dominant academic voice in the study of gentrification, but a ‘geography of gentrification’ (Ley, 1996a; Lees, 2000) is still only in its infancy. I view it as a project of great importance which has received surprisingly little attention from the international research community. The geography of gentrification can be defined as

¹ These will be reviewed in Chapter 2.

an academic effort to assess the contextual specificities of the gentrification process, with particular sensitivity to the ways in which the process is configured under interlocking geographical scales. As social sciences and the humanities finally begin to recognise the relevance of space and scale in explaining contemporary urban phenomena (e.g. Soja, 1996; Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Swyngedouw, 1997; Marston, 2000; Brenner, 2001), geographers are well equipped to take up the challenge of constructing a geography of gentrification, and it is hoped that the results of this comparative study will make an important contribution.

Why is the geography of gentrification an important direction for academic research? Four clear and interrelated reasons can be put forward. First, it may provide further insights to scholarship addressing the temporal dimensions of gentrification. The process intensified as the pendulum of the economy swung towards recovery after the late 1980s and early 1990s recession, and while the global economic outlook is far from healthy as I write, the return of gentrification has raised all kinds of new questions about the temporal dimensions of the process, and why some areas are experiencing 'post-recession gentrification' with greater intensity than others (e.g. Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Lees, 2000; Hackworth, 2001, 2002; Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Wyly and Hammel, 2001). A geography of gentrification might provide further clues in the effort to trace the differential pace and path of the process.

Second, gentrification remains a contestable social and political issue. The implications of the displacement of low-income/working class populations through gentrification continue to trigger a concern with issues of social (in)justice and inequality. Implicit or explicit connections are often made in the literature between gentrification and social exclusion (Smith, 1996; Amin, Massey and Thrift, 2000), homelessness (Perissini and McDonald, 2000; Layton, 2000), privatised public space and citizenship rights (Lees, 1997; Mitchell, 1997; Atkinson, 2001), community destruction (Smith, 1996; Betancur, 2002), polarisation and widening social inequalities (van Kempen and van Weesep, 1991; Butler and Robson, 2001), class and racial discrimination in mortgage lending (Wyly and Hammel, 1999, 2001), and 'zero tolerance' policing in the reclaiming of neighbourhoods for middle-class consumption (Smith, 1999, 2001; Merrifield, 2000), to name just a few. These issues are all urgent and worrying, but have different saliency in different places, and a

geography of gentrification can reveal where and why these unjust events are occurring, the harsh lessons to be learned, and the implications for other gentrifying areas. Superimposed on this is another concern of the geographer interested in the spatial arrangement of social classes over urban space: quite simply, who should live where? Middle-classes are chastised for living in gated suburban communities, but equally chastised when they choose to live in central city locations and contribute to their 'improvement'. What light might a geography of gentrification throw on this predicament?

Third, the ways in which the process has become part of an urban policy agenda to improve the economic, physical and social outlook of disinvested central city locations has been subject to much recent attention (Lees, 2000, 2003a; Atkinson, 2001; Curran, 2001; Wyly and Hammel, 2001; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Often disguised as 'regeneration', 'renaissance', 'revitalization' or 'renewal', gentrification has worked its way back into the planning manifestos of many well-publicised attempts to inject flows of capital into previously 'neglected' central city locales. The UK Government's 'Urban Task Force' (Amin, Massey and Thrift, 2000) and more recently its 'Urban White Paper' (Lees, 2003a) exemplify this new trend, and other schemes are being utilised by the political administrations of many other Western cities (Smith, 2002a). However, some of the work which has emerged to address the impact of gentrification on urban policy, and vice versa, has tended to dismiss and generalise all regeneration schemes as evil neo-liberalism at work without serious examination of the ethos, design and implementation of such regeneration schemes (e.g. Smith, 2002a; Hackworth, 2002). If this sort of reasoning continues, it does not allow room for a dialogue between policy and scholarship that appears to be of paramount importance (Lees, 2003b). A geography of gentrification is therefore needed to keep up with different policy strategies in different places, critically assess their implications, and challenge those policies which are not sensitive to the local context.

Fourth, a geography of gentrification may cast critical light on two contrasting discourses which have emerged with the resurgence of both gentrification and academic work on gentrification (Lees, 2000; Slater, 2002a). The 'revanchist city' discourse (Smith, 1996), a construct arising predominantly from the study of

gentrification in American cities, especially New York City, is almost the exact opposite of the 'emancipatory city' discourse (termed by Lees, 2000), a construct which has emerged in large measure from the study of gentrification in Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. These discourses will be explored in depth in this thesis, but it is necessary here to point out that they address an enduring dichotomy in gentrification debate - whether gentrification is a desirable or objectionable aspect of urban transformation. A geography of gentrification, where this dichotomy is explored theoretically and empirically in a wide variety of contexts by the international research community, may add some interesting perspectives to what has long been a topic of heated discussion among gentrification researchers.

This study will engage with all of the reasons presented above in considerable depth through a comparative investigation of gentrification in two different neighbourhoods, of two different cities in two different countries. It cannot alone provide a comprehensive geography of gentrification, but it is a contribution to this collective academic project, and one which is timely considering the resilience of old debates and overgeneralisations on gentrification (to be discussed in Chapter 2). Six chapters follow on from this introduction. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive critical assessment of the resurgence of gentrification research, highlighting various epistemological gaps and the scholarly trends which preclude a geography of gentrification, before concluding with an outline of my research aims. In Chapter 3 I present a retrospective account of the methods and techniques I used to gather information, as well as a concise discussion of the problems and possibilities of international comparative research. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of six months gentrification research in South Parkdale, Toronto, Canada, and six months in Lower Park Slope, New York City, USA. Chapter 6 brings together the evidence from each case study and summarises the main similarities and differences I uncovered in the process of gentrification between each case, and Chapter 7 concludes matters by returning to my research aims and showing how this research has contributed to a geography of gentrification.

CHAPTER 2 - THE RESURGENCE OF GENTRIFICATION RESEARCH: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

2.1 The importance of defining gentrification

A renowned urban scholar has recently argued that how gentrification is evaluated depends “a great deal” on how it is defined (Marcuse, 1999, p.789). As Wyly and Hammel (2001) point out, during the 1970s and 1980s the definition of the process “eluded broad consensus, and inspired considerable disagreement over the magnitude and relevance of a turnaround in the inner city” (p.213). Even today, there is no evidence of a universally acceptable definition, something that indicates the different perspectives and political leanings of different scholars, and also how the process has changed over time. As is now widely acknowledged, the term was coined by the sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe a particular kind of residential transformation taking place in many London neighbourhoods:

“One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle-classes - upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages - two rooms up and two down - have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period – which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation – have been upgraded once again.....Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (Glass, 1964, p.xviii).

While Glass’s description was “chilling in its prescience” with respect to the class transformation of many London neighbourhoods over the last forty years (Butler, 2002, p.4), the extent and meaning of gentrification have changed remarkably since 1964. First, the widening *extent* of gentrification is clear from an examination of the literature. Once an unexpected empirical phenomenon confined to the largest ‘world cities’ such as London, New York, and Toronto, it has now been observed in cities further down the urban hierarchy such as, inter alia, Bristol (Lambert and Boddy, 2002), Glasgow (Atkinson, 2001), Milwaukee (Kenny, 1995), Detroit (Wyly and Hammel, 1999, 2001) and Halifax (Ley, 1996a). The expansion of gentrification has also been witnessed in the cities where the process was first observed – for example,

in London, many parts of Hackney have gentrified (Butler, 1997), and Brixton is now gentrifying (Butler and Robson, 2001); and in New York, we have seen gentrification spread to neighbourhoods in Brooklyn and Queens which escaped early gentrification in the 1960s and 70s (Hackworth, 2001, Smith, 2002b). Second, recent years have seen continued debate over the *meaning* of the term ‘gentrification’, particularly with respect to its creeping expansion to encompass ‘new-build’ luxury housing developments (such as those on ‘brownfield’ sites), and the conversion of derelict warehouses into loft apartments and condominiums. The question of whether gentrification can refer to such broad restructuring of the inner city was recently taken up by Lambert and Boddy (2002) in a study of gentrification in Bristol:

“[W]e would question whether the sort of new housing development and conversion described in Bristol and other second tier UK cities, or indeed the development of London’s Docklands can, in fact, still be characterised as ‘gentrification’... ‘[G]entrification’, as originally coined, referred primarily to a rather different type of ‘new middle class’, buying up older, often ‘historic’ individual housing units and renovating and restoring them for their own use – and in the process driving up property values and driving out former, typically lower income working class residents. ...We would conclude.....that to describe these processes as gentrification is stretching the term and what it set out to describe too far” (p.20).

For Lambert and Boddy, any reference to ‘gentrification’ must remain firmly in tune with Ruth Glass’s coinage of the term. This would no doubt bother Smith (1996), who feels that a distinction between the rehabilitation of existing (inhabited) stock and new construction or the conversion of derelict stock is no longer useful, and argues to the contrary that gentrification has departed from Glass’s description, and now refers to a much broader phenomenon:

“How, in the large context of changing social geographies, are we to distinguish adequately between the rehabilitation of nineteenth-century housing, the construction of new condominium towers, the opening of festival markets to attract local and not so local tourists, the proliferation of wine bars – and boutiques for everything – and the construction of modern and postmodern office buildings employing thousands of professionals, all looking for a place to live? ...Gentrification is no longer about a narrow and quixotic oddity in the housing market but has become the leading residential edge of a much larger endeavour: the class remake of the central urban landscape” (p.39).

In the most recent edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Smith defines gentrification as

“[t]he reinvestment of capital at the urban centre, which is designed to produce space for a more affluent class of people than currently occupies that space” (Smith, 2000a, p.294).

While this is hardly the complete perspective of many of his colleagues, who would perhaps seek a more inclusive definition devoid of the particular politics of the definer, Smith is surely correct to argue that contemporary gentrification cannot be viewed strictly through the Ruth Glass lens, and that the most important aspect of her work we should register is the emphasis on class transformation. Whether gentrification is new-build or the renovation of existing stock, whether it be urban, suburban or even rural, it refers, as its *gentri*- syllables attest, to *the class dimensions of urban change* - not just changes in the housing stock, but changes in housing class.

There is also the issue of *displacement*, “when pressures on the housing market from affluent groups create inflated rents and prices which can push out the low paid or unpaid over time” (Atkinson, 2000a, p.307), versus *replacement*, where “working-class homeowners....[take] advantage of the rise of property values to retire, sell out and move to the suburbs or beyond”, leading to “a process of slow replacement of a group which is contracting by one which is growing” (Hamnett, 2002, p.25-27). Some definitions of gentrification treat displacement as an inevitable outcome of the process:

“[Gentrification is] the movement into a previously working-class area by upper-income households, generally professionals, managers, technicians, the new gentry, resulting in the displacement of the former lower-income residents” (Marcuse, 1999, p.790-1).

This is perhaps a rather narrow “made in the USA” perspective, for as Atkinson (2000a) has recently argued in contrast to the American context, “the connection between gentrification and the displacement of indigenous residents has barely been made in the British and European context” (p.308). This was surely a factor behind Hamnett’s widely cited (1984) definition of gentrification:

“Simultaneously a physical, economic, social and cultural phenomenon, gentrification commonly involves the invasion by middle-class or higher-income groups of previously working-class neighbourhoods or multi-occupied ‘twilight areas’ and the *replacement or displacement* of many of the original occupants” (p.284, emphasis added).

While talk of ‘twilight areas’ is perhaps rather dated, this is a useful definition because of its description of gentrification as a multi-faceted phenomenon, and its questioning of the assumption of displacement. Together with recognition of its multi-faceted nature, and given the fact that this is a study of *urban* gentrification (not suburban or rural), I define gentrification as the transformation of a working class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential use. Given the fact that many political administrations now avoid using the term ‘gentrification’, preferring class-neutral terms such as ‘regeneration’ and ‘renaissance’ that effectively deflect criticism and resistance (Smith, 2002a; Lees, 2003a), it seems of paramount importance to remind ourselves that gentrification is “fundamentally rooted in class” (Wyly and Hammel, 1999, p.716). Each class transformation does not necessarily result in displacement, but that does not mean that we should ignore the possibility, or even likelihood, of displacement as each transformation takes place.

With gentrification now defined, this opening chapter will throw critical light on the recent resurgence of gentrification research in an attempt to provide the background and justification for my addition to the literature. It will conclude with a section outlining my research aims, and how these aims both attach to and detach from the body of recent work to be placed under scrutiny. It should be stated here that what follows is not another comprehensive review of the gentrification literature from the 1960s to the 1990s – thorough critical reviews have been published by others (Hamnett, 1991; Lees, 1994b, 2000; Smith, 1996; Ley, 1996a; Butler, 1997; Redfern, 1997) and adding further criticisms would undermine my attempt to move away from the theoretical divisions that dominated the gentrification literature in the 1980s (and as I will argue, unnecessarily pervade the current literature). The time frame for the discussion that follows is from the early 1990s to present: from ‘degentrification’ to ‘post-recession’ (or ‘third-wave’) gentrification, with particular attention to how a

meticulous reading of the literature during this period finds Ley's (1996a) call for a 'geography of gentrification' to be largely unanswered. In sum, the purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a comprehensive, critical introduction to the key themes that later run through my own empirical research into gentrification.

2.2 The 'degentrification' debate

"It will perhaps not come as a shock to anyone who has worked in the field to learn that gentrification fluctuates in intensity, that it has its swings and waxes and wanes" (Marcuse, 1999, p.795).

The stock-market crash of 1987 and the subsequent worldwide recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s chime long and loud in the memory. The bright economic outlook of the Reagan and Thatcher era gave way to a time of worry and pessimism. The real-estate industry was particularly hard hit. In Western cities, homeowners found themselves in a situation of 'negative equity', and corporate redundancy policies had begun to affect the prospects of the new middle-classes, whose "residential preferences and investment decisions had facilitated gentrification" (Lees, 2000, p.389). In many cities where gentrification had been rampant, the crisis in the real-estate industry led to an abrupt halt or slowdown in the process. Speculation began in the media over 'degentrification' – an end to all the neighbourhood changes brought on by gentrification since the 1960s (Bagli, 1991), where gentrification might become something which "may be remembered....as just another grand excess of the 1980s" (Lueck, 1991). Two papers by Bourne (1993a, 1993b) attempted to bolster these predictions. Based on evidence from Canadian cities, he argued that the 'demise' of gentrification would lead to a 'post-gentrification era' because

"the supply of potential young gentrifiers will be significantly smaller, given the passing of the baby-boom into middle-age, the declining rate of new household formation, and the general aging of the population. The expanding cohort of potential young gentrifiers will not be sufficient to compensate for the rapid decline in the younger cohorts. At the same time, given widespread macro-economic restructuring, corporate down-sizing and a persistent recession, we might also expect slower rates of employment growth in the service sector and associated occupations" (Bourne, 1993a, p.104-5).

At the time Bourne's work was published, academic interest in gentrification was at a low point for three key reasons. First, the winding down of the process was challenging existing theories and prophecies, and second, gentrification debates such as that between Hamnett (1991, 1992) and Smith (1992) had become exhausted (Clark, 1992; Lees, 1994b; Bridge, 1995; Redfern, 1997) and, it could be argued, were suffering from 'paralysis-by-analysis'². An 'agree to disagree' culture had emerged among leading researchers, with major theoretical and political gulfs appearing irreconcilable. Wyly and Hammel (2001), commenting on what they call "the disappearance and return of gentrification research", elaborate:

"By the end of the 1980s these debates seemed to exhaust themselves with no prospect of a final 'resolution', and on empirical grounds gentrification appeared ready to collapse under the weight of every demand- and supply-side factor cited to explain its emergence" (p.215-6).

Many scholars chose to jettison gentrification research in favour of other avenues of inquiry that were free from the ball and chain of apparently intractable divisions such as Marxist versus liberal, economics versus culture, production versus consumption, structure versus agency, and so forth. The third reason reflects the changing theoretical framework of urban geographical scholarship. In the early 1990s, the study of the spatial arrangement of different social classes over urban space became sidelined by the influence of theoretical developments associated with human geography's 'cultural turn', such as feminism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology (Philo, 2000). As Philo points out, under the broader philosophical umbrellas of postmodernism and poststructuralism, a new body of work emerged in reaction to the Marxism and humanism of earlier decades, "dematerializing" and "desocializing" urban geography into a new, uncharted terrain of immaterial cultural processes and complex identity politics (p.33; see also Lees, 2002). The issues and concepts at the core of these new theories - difference, representation, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality – and the impact of each on urban space (and vice versa) were analysed with less regard for the theories of class which came before. From a Marxist perspective, Smith elaborates:

² David Ley recently pointed out to me that these debates were very overdrawn, and writings "got away" from himself and Neil Smith, when in fact their perspectives were not nearly as far apart as was widely perceived (David Ley, personal communication, 27th September 2002; but see Smith, 1987 and the response by Ley, 1987).

“The displacement of class as an object of geographical inquiry....came partly from direct challenges as competing social theories exploded in the 1980s....Within the context of a wider cultural turn, they sought either to negotiate a relationship with class theory or deny it altogether” (Smith, 2000b, p.1017).

When one considers what underwrites the term *gentrification*, a process of class transformation in the inner-city, it is not surprising that researching gentrification became less appealing to some geographers in the early 1990s. The distraction of the cultural turn, where class became enveloped by enticing new categories of investigation, prompted a key figure in the gentrification literature, Badcock (1996), to argue that the cultural turn had switched attention away from how capital and class structure power relations, and had cloaked the social consequences of spatial practices. This is not to say that there was a unilateral departure from gentrification research - at the time, some scholars showed very clearly that gentrification is a process which is not just reducible to capital and class – it could be approached by examining the relationship between capital, class *and* cultural turn categories of investigation, as Anderson (1990) and Taylor (1992) did with race, Bondi (1991) and Warde (1991) did with gender, Lees (1996) did with representation and Knopp (1995) and Rothenburg (1995) did with sexuality. However, there was a noticeable decline in the overall *volume* of gentrification research (Wyly and Hammel, 1999, 2001), suggesting that the attentions of many researchers were directed elsewhere in the early 1990s.

While gentrification research was not thriving when Bourne’s predictions of degentrification were published, it was arguably those predictions that helped to trigger the broader scholarly reengagement with gentrification that we have seen since the mid-1990s. Bourne’s work was thorough and persuasive, and thus could not be ignored. While the theoretical debate was clearly exhausted, was the process of gentrification really exhausted too? Were we really about to enter a ‘post-gentrification era’? While his evidence was interesting in its underlining of the now-absent factors which once gave rise to Canadian gentrification, his conclusion seemed to generalise the Canadian experience into a prediction of gentrification patterns *everywhere*, and the evidence presented was weighted towards the demand-

side explanation of gentrification. Badcock (1993, 1995) found no evidence from his research in several Australian cities to support Bourne's predictions, and Lees and Bondi (1995) pointed out that he provided "no hard evidence of a *reversal* of the gentrification process" (p.235), using findings from research in the Lower East Side and Park Slope, New York City, to reject the post-gentrification thesis. Smith (1996) also engaged in the degentrification debate by reasserting his structuralist explanation of gentrification. He contended that disinvestment in times of recession in fact sets the stage for reinvestment and gentrification. The following sentences are convincing, but an unwelcome return to the old lines of debate in the 1980s:

"Predictions of the demise of gentrification are premised on essentially consumption-side explanations of the process, in which any pickup in the economic demand is magically converted into a long-term trend.....The decline in housing and land prices since 1989 has been accompanied by a disinvestment from older housing stock...and these are precisely the conditions which led to the availability of a comparatively cheap housing stock in central locations. Far from ending gentrification, the depression of the late 1980s and early 1990s may well enhance the possibilities for reinvestment" (Smith, 1996, p.229).

If we follow Smith, recent gentrification has been intensified by the severity of the early 1990s recession. Ley (1996a) was also sceptical and, contra Bourne, predicted that 'baby boomers' would in fact retire in the inner city, so the supply of potential gentrifiers would not dwindle at all. Wyly and Hammel (1999) undertook quantitative research into the resurgence of gentrification in eight American cities and identified a striking pattern where, through the interlocking public-sector influences of housing finance and low-income assistance, Berry's (1985) famous 'islands of renewal in seas of decay' observation had metamorphosed into 'islands of decay in seas of renewal'; for Wyly and Hammel, "predictions of the demise of gentrification were exaggerated" (p.738). Smith and DeFilippis (1999) continued the historiography of one of the most famous gentrified neighbourhoods, the Lower East Side, and found that "[v]irtually every sector of the [housing] market was up – lofts and coops, sales and rentals,....and the dismal predictions of degentrification six years earlier simply evaporated amidst an unprecedented embrace of a rising market" (p.641). Hackworth (2001) evaluated the impact of recession on housing market investment and mapped the changes to the 'reinvested core' of New York City since the recession. He found more evidence to refute Bourne by informing us that

“housing markets within the RC [reinvested core] (particularly gentrified ones) experienced the sharpest relative downturn during the recession,” but since the recession there has “been a notable *expansion* of the reinvested core into previously disinvested parts of northeastern and central Brooklyn” (p.878, my emphasis).

It is now clear that Bourne’s predictions of a post-gentrification era, refuted by several gentrification researchers, did not materialise. The language which replaced the post-gentrification thesis was that of a ‘post-recession’ era of *accelerated*, ‘third wave’ gentrification, which has taken a quite different form from earlier ‘waves’ of the process. Hackworth and Smith (2001) argue that post-recession gentrification (from 1993 onwards) differs from earlier gentrification in four ways. First, gentrification is expanding within the neighbourhoods it affected during earlier waves, and has also expanded to remote neighbourhoods beyond the central city. Second, the real estate industry has restructured under globalisation, providing a platform for the involvement of larger developers in gentrification. Third, resistance to gentrification has declined due to continued working-class displacement from the inner city, and fourth, the state is now more involved in gentrification than in the 1980s ‘second wave’, which was largely market driven. In later chapters, I will demonstrate from my own research that the geographical applicability of these four aspects is questionable, even within the city where they were formulated (New York), but here it is important to take a critical look at the scholarship which has emerged to assess post-recession gentrification, in order to illustrate the trends which have been a major motivating force behind this study.

2.3 Post-recession gentrification and the resilience of theoretical divisions

“[T]he interdigitation of economic and cultural competencies and pursuits in the gentrification field makes any statement of mono-causality questionable. It is not a matter of whether economic or cultural arguments prevail, but rather how they work together to produce gentrification as an outcome” (Ley, 2002, p.16).

Not long ago, in a trenchant critique of a research topic to which she has contributed much (Bondi, 1991, 1998, 1999b), Bondi welcomed the early 1990s winding down of gentrification studies:

“I wonder if a decline in academic work on gentrification might actually be a sign of good health....[T]he more researchers have attempted to pin it down, the more burdens the concept has had to carry. Maybe the loss of momentum around gentrification reflects its inability to open up new insights, and maybe it is time to allow it to disintegrate under the weight of these burdens” (Bondi, 1999a, p.255).

At first glance this might seem a remarkable turnaround from a scholar well known to gentrification researchers, but when one considers the history of scholarly engagement with the process, it is possible to empathise with her frustration. Bondi was clearly troubled by the monotony of the gentrification debate – the continued obsession with cause over effect, the irksome ideological squabbles over whether economics or culture (or production/consumption, supply/demand) was more important in driving gentrification, and the ‘agree to disagree’ climate that was uncomfortable, far from progressive and apparently irreconcilable. Wyly and Hammel (1999, p.723), writing at the same time as Bondi, noted that “despite attempts to forge a new synthesis, much of the gentrification literature remains balkanised along lines of debate established a generation ago”.

A survey of the literature that emerged to study the resurgence of gentrification after the recession provides ample support for Wyly and Hammel’s assertion. By this time, it was clear that the competition between theories of gentrification could be jettisoned in favour of an approach which looked at how economics and culture were in fact complementary in causing neighbourhood change (Clark, 1992). In an important critique of one-sided explanations, Lees (1994b) called for a ‘productive tension’ between economic Marxism and cultural postmodernism. The rationale for a complementary perspective was set out as follows:

“The principle of complementarity attempts to overcome duality not by looking for a new universal theory, but *by comparing and informing one set of ideas with another*” (Lees, 1994b, p.139, emphasis added).

In the context of gentrification, Lees contended that “juxtaposing a Marxist analysis with a cultural analysis allows political economy, culture and society to be

considered together, enabling a more sensitive illustration of the gentrification process” (p.148).

The literature which followed did not develop a productive tension in the way Lees and others would have liked. Whilst much of this work was innovative in its attempt to resuscitate and refine theories of class, gender and sexuality (Butler and Hamnett, 1994; Bridge, 1994, 1995; Rothenburg, 1995; Knopp, 1995; Lyons, 1996; Rose, 1996; Butler 1997; Bondi, 1998, 1999b), there emerged something of a ‘theoretical logjam’ (Redfern, 1997) in gentrification research. While gentrification researchers began acknowledging the roles of economics *and* culture, and did become interested in “synthesizing, integrating, or uniting very different approaches” (Clark, 1994, p.1034), the search for a synthesis of explanations became so awkward, contended Redfern, that we required “not more attempts at synthesizing the existing theories, but fresh attempts at theorizing the process as a whole” (p.1277). His own attempt at re-theorizing, that it was the decreasing price and increasing availability of ‘domestic technologies’ which drove gentrification, was certainly fresh but highly questionable given the fact that these technologies were more instrumental in driving the quite different process of suburbanisation (Lees, 2000). In this sense Redfern’s ‘new look at gentrification’, a supposed challenge to the academic presumption that ‘gentrifiers gentrify because they have to’, promised far more than it delivered, and subsequently his line of argument has not been developed.

A critical survey of more recent scholarship on post-recession gentrification illustrates a pattern that has been a major motivational force behind the research that constitutes this thesis. There are signs that gentrification discourse is *still* locked within the zeitgeist of the 1980s, rehashing the tiresome debates of old – precisely the reason why Bondi (1999a) suggested we let gentrification research ‘disintegrate’. Take for example a recent paper by Hamnett (2000), published in a text intended as an academic guide to contemporary urban issues. After reviewing some recent work, his conclusion could have been written twenty years ago:

“While there is no doubt that gentrification is consistently associated with a sharp increase in property prices in areas where it occurs, I am dubious of the extent to which the rent gap is a principal driver if this process. There is no doubt that property prices in potentially gentrifiable areas are relatively low

and that this is, or was, one of the key attractions for gentrifiers, but it is not a sufficient explanation” (p.337).

The recent calls to move away from this exhausted debate appear to have bypassed Hamnett, perhaps because his review does not include several of the important contributions where calls for a new direction were made. In a more recent plenary address to a conference on gentrification in Glasgow, Hamnett once again showed his disrespect for a complementary perspective:

“The argument made here is that the basis of an effective explanation [of gentrification] has to rest on the demand side rather than the supply side of the equation” (Hamnett, 2002, p.4).

Along these lines, while his sophisticated treatment of Bourdieu’s theories on social, cultural and economic capital merits our attention, Bridge (2001a) has also not distanced himself from past gentrification debates: “[T]he argument in this paper and elsewhere is that economic capital becomes more significant than cultural capital as gentrification proceeds” (p.92). A companion essay urges an even stronger adherence to the theories of Bourdieu by unearthing another old debate, this time on how consumer choice relates to class consolidation:

“Gentrification provides an example where the class habitus is adapted to a new field as a result of the existing habitus and the articulation of prior dispositions. It also involves conscious choices involving the physical and social environment exercised by a few members of the ‘urban’ middle class and developing into a set of practices that become the focal point for wider class habitus” (Bridge, 2001b, p.213).

While a focus on the causes of gentrification per se was secondary to his very interesting attempt to demonstrate how Bourdieu’s theories are crucial to our understanding of the practices of gentrifiers, it is difficult to see how arguments such as this could be construed as novel observations. Badcock (2001) also joins in with the old Ley/Smith/Hamnett debate:

“It is impossible to escape the structuralist and functionalist overtones of the rent-gap hypothesis..... Apart from this, an exclusive focus upon the production of gentrifiers runs the risk of missing other crucial aspects of inner-city restructuring, tenorial transformation and class changeover” (p.1561).

This debate was important in the 1970s and 1980s as we tried to understand and explain gentrification, but in 2001 one is left wondering why we need to be reminded of what is excluded by the rent-gap thesis.

Hackworth and Smith (2001) provide further evidence of adherence to this apparently immortal debate. While their essay contains a useful summary of the historiography of gentrification, teasing out the nature of different 'waves' of gentrification in New York City and the temperamental involvement of the state within these waves, it retreats back into the same divisive approach which dominated the gentrification literature during the (1980s) 'second wave' they identify:

"Overall, economic forces driving [current] gentrification seem to have eclipsed cultural factors as the scale of investment is greater and the level of corporate, as opposed to smaller-scale capital, has grown" (p.468).

This is unconvincing - it is hard to think of any example of gentrification where both economic *and* cultural factors have not been operating, and where cultural factors are subject to a total eclipse, even if the economic factors are more tangible to these authors.

The point of this rather trenchant criticism of scholars from whom I have learned a great deal is *not* to diminish the importance of these debates, or dismiss the often sophisticated theoretical and empirical frameworks which attempted to understand gentrification when it emerged with full force in the 1980s. It is rather to question the political relevance of such debates when there is widespread scholarly agreement that gentrification is a multi-faceted phenomenon which can only be explained from a holistic point of departure (e.g. Rose, 1996; Butler, 1997; Lees, 2000; Butler and Robson, 2001; Wyly and Hammel, 2001), and also to answer earlier calls to move away from research which falls into the same conceptually divisive approach (Clark, 1992; Lees, 1994b). Gentrification has changed, but disappointingly the approach of some scholars (especially some major voices in the literature) has not changed *with* the subject. One of the more attractive frameworks which attempts to reconcile academic divisions, yet is thoroughly in tune with the key insights from different schools of thought, is that of the 'geography of gentrification' (Ley, 1996a; Lees,

2000; Slater, 2002). A meticulous reading of the gentrification literature in the post-recession era finds a geography of gentrification still in its infancy, and this thesis attempts to provide a theoretically-informed empirical contribution to a small body of earlier work which argues that the context in which gentrification occurs is crucial to its interpretation (Lees, 1994a, 2000; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Eade and Mele, 1998; Butler and Robson, 2001).

2.4 The geography of gentrification

Adding insult to the unfortunate fact that geographers have hardly addressed the geography of gentrification, it is two sociologists who have put forward the most compelling evidence yet that we require such a geography. Butler and Robson (2001) attempted to tease out subtle differences in the ways in which middle-class groups 'come to terms with London' (see also Robson and Butler, 2001) in different London neighbourhoods. The impetus for their research was clearly set out:

"One criticism of existing approaches to gentrification is that they tend to see gentrification as a more or less homogenous process – whatever their differences, neither Smith...nor Ley...appear to explore differences within the gentrification process. Our hypothesis is that different middle-class groups would be attracted to different areas and this would be determined by a range of factors, in addition to what they might be able to afford in particular housing markets" (Butler and Robson, 2001, pages 2146-8).

After testing this hypothesis by interviewing gentrifiers in Telegraph Hill, Battersea and Brixton, they found that gentrification had consolidated very different forms of middle-class identity in each location. It is most refreshing to see research which takes a closer look at the effects of gentrification, and concludes with the argument that "[g]entrification.....cannot in any sense be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined in each case according to its own logic and outcomes" (page 2160). While their own contribution to the geography of gentrification is limited to one city, it shows that there is substantial differentiation in social change between London neighbourhoods which are not separated by much physical distance – a major finding that moves away from earlier research which took a broader, quantitative view and thus tended to refer to 'London's gentrification' (e.g. Williams, 1976; Hamnett and Randolph, 1984; Munt, 1987).

A geography of gentrification requires an academic effort to assess the contextual specificities of the gentrification process, with particular sensitivity to the ways in which the process is configured under interlocking geographical scales. While it must be considered as a *collective* academic effort, to which we can all contribute scholarship just from research in one place, it is comparative investigation that arguably offers the most potential to illuminate the different intensities and nuances of gentrification between different places. Ley's original (1996a) call for a geography of gentrification was based on a hitherto absent explanation for different intensities of gentrification across the globe:

"The *embourgeoisement* of the inner city.....is incomplete even in those neighbourhoods where it has been most prominent, but none the less it has contributed to a significant reshaping in the housing market in cities with expanding downtown employment in advanced services. This qualifier immediately leads to the important recognition that there is a geography to gentrification, that the trends remaking the inner cities of Toronto, San Francisco, or London are not shared by Winnipeg, Detroit, or Liverpool" (p.8).

To assess this geography he advocated a comparative research agenda at three geographical scales – international, inter-metropolitan and inter-neighbourhood (p.81). His assessment of Canadian city gentrification which followed addressed the latter two scales, but he was more cautious with the largest scale, contending that "internationally, no truly comparative data exist to permit an assessment of the variation of inner-city reinvestment by country" (p.81). This might account for the fact that international comparisons of gentrification are still a rarity³, but it is important to point out that Ley meant that no data exist for the purposes of rigorous statistical comparison – there is no question that other sources of data could allow for a comparative assessment. Furthermore, a lack of 'truly comparative' statistical data should not detract from the important potential of international comparison to contribute to the geography of gentrification through a heightened sensitivity to the mutually constitutive local, national and global aspects of urban change (cf. Brenner, 2001).

³ For exceptions, see Cybriwsky, Ley and Western, 1986; Lees, 1994a, 1996; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Smith, 1996; Eade and Mele, 1998.

Carpenter and Lees (1995) provided a useful template by comparing the historiographies of gentrification in London, New York and Paris with the intention of questioning generalisations about the process and exploring key contextual differences between these global cities. They found that in each city “there are certain factors...without which gentrification may not have taken place” (p.300). Although there was a coincidence of disinvestment and state involvement in reinvestment common to each context, this occurred in urban areas with very different histories which played a significant role in the pace and pattern of gentrification. This gave rise to the argument that “local contextualities render the gentrification process to have a relevant degree of place specificity” (p.300; see also Lees, 1994a). In this work we see the interaction between the local and the global in gentrification theory – global processes have a local expression but the local context ensures that the global processes do not have the same manifestations everywhere. Something of the experience of the interplay between the local and the global and its effects on urban space has been explored in another qualitative international comparison undertaken by Eade and Mele (1998). Examining the cultural reconstruction of place in the East Village, New York and both The Docklands and Spitalfields, London, they argue that

“global/local processes are characterised by multiple, richly complex and, sometimes, conflicting layers of interaction between community and global realms of political, economic and social life.....The content of the social, economic, cultural and political forces at work in each area was sometimes strikingly different.....Yet all three areas were affected by the same process where non-local (or global) representations of place promoted the physical redevelopment of local communities” (Eade and Mele, 1998, p.69).

Comparative research demonstrates how local and global forces constantly interact as they redefine urban space physically, socially, economically and culturally, and the complexities, even ‘chaos’ (Rose, 1984; Beauregard, 1986), of the gentrification process are in part a consequence of this interaction. It is *both* local and global conditions which set the stage for urban change, and the two scales are not structurally irreconcilable but mutually constitutive. Eade and Mele illustrate that disentangling the local idiosyncrasies of the gentrification process from the global operations which affect the inner-city would not be as useful an approach as one which looks at precisely how both parts of the local-global binary are intertwined in

contemporary metropolitan restructuring. Therefore more comparative studies of gentrification are needed to stop theories of gentrification 'travelling' from place to place without grasping the particular contexts from which these theories emerged.

In the last few years, while comparative studies are still thin on the ground, some excellent new work has appeared which, when considered as a collective, has moved the geography of gentrification from embryonic to infancy status. At the time of writing it seems that much exciting work is taking place in a renewed enthusiasm for gentrification research. It is promising to see that gentrification is once again a research topic in its own right, a valuable lens through which to examine a variety of intersecting phenomena in a neighbourhood context, rather than couched in other topics and integrated into other areas of urban research (Hammel and Wyly, 2002). Badcock's (2001) contribution updates a long-term investigation into the class transformation of the neighbourhoods of inner Adelaide, Australia (see also Badcock and Ulrich-Cloher, 1981; Badcock, 1991). He reports that both the South Australian (State) and Commonwealth (federal) governments were instrumental in enticing private reinvestment into the disinvested inner-western suburbs of the city, the last segment of inner Adelaide to gentrify. That area was nominated by the State's Inner Western Program for 'Better Cities Improvement Area' status, and this put the State "in the position to compete successfully for programme funds provided by the Commonwealth" (p.1570). The private reinvestment in housing and infrastructure which followed has now ensured that "the inner suburbs on all four sides of the City of Adelaide have been transformed over the past 30 years" (ibid. p.1570). An understanding of the Australian context, and the differentiation within it, is furthered by the recent work of Gary Bridge (2001a), who has undertaken qualitative work in three neighbourhoods of Sydney to explore estate agents' understandings and representations of the relationship between housing taste and price. Following Bourdieu, and building on the important findings of Jager (1986), he examined the ways in which estate agents are social and financial 'intermediaries' in the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital:

"Gentrification can be seen as a 'field' in Bourdieu's terms, a terrain where the particular mixtures of economic and cultural capital are deployed by different classes to maintain distinction from each other. These relationships exist both in social space and over time" (Bridge, 2001a, p.92).

From his interviews with several Sydney estate agents, Bridge observed that they must interpret and negotiate “contrasts in the class-based judgement of taste...when moving between working-class vendor and middle-class purchaser” (p.91) in order to convert cultural tastes into profits. A very different account of gentrification in Australia from that of Badcock’s was thus presented, illustrating that the framework and methodologies of the researcher lead to contrasting accounts of who or what is more important in sustaining the process of central city transformation. Where Badcock is quantitatively concerned with the changing role of the public sector, Bridge is qualitatively concerned with the changing role of a specific kind of private sector actor. The issue of how different research techniques and concerns impact a geography of gentrification will be taken up in greater depth in Chapter 3.

Wyly and Hammel (2001) found van Weesep’s (1994) call ‘to put the gentrification debate into policy perspective’ enticing, and have continued their consistently high-quality research into the geography of gentrification within the United States, exploring the public housing policy-gentrification dialectic in eight cities. Their conclusions are striking. Against broader changes in urban political economy, they found that “gentrification has come to mediate the design and implementation of local efforts to remake assisted housing policy⁴”, and in turn, found “a simultaneous expansion of affordable homeownership and accelerated class turnover as housing finance unleashes powerful forces on gentrification” (p.264). However, it is most interesting that these American city findings were applied to a wider context:

“we find a clear resurgence of capital investment that lays to rest any doubt that gentrification is an inherent feature of *North American urbanization*..... *North American cities* are now in the third wave of gentrification” (p.263-4, emphasis added).

It is disappointing that their important contribution to a geography of gentrification was somewhat insensitive to the national scale – no Canadian cities feature in their assessment. This follows the long-standing and unfortunate tradition in urban geography of making generalisations about North American cities without proper

⁴ Specifically, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) HOPE VI program, which is built on the ideologies of inner-city income mixing and some privatisation of public housing.

appreciation of the geographical diversity within and between cities in that continent (Goldberg and Mercer, 1986). Here we reach an important reason why a geography of gentrification is a project of such importance – is it possible, even wise, to refer to ‘North American gentrification’? This project alone cannot answer such a question, for it demands a more wide-ranging empirical investigation into gentrification in *many* Canadian and American cities. However, by comparing gentrification in one Canadian city neighbourhood with gentrification in one American city neighbourhood, the findings and conclusions may nudge us in the right direction and contribute some preliminary insights. It is useful now to summarise the debate over the ‘North American City’ – a debate which will form the tenor behind the international comparison that constitutes the core of this project.

2.5 Continentalism and ‘The Myth of the North American City’

“The impact of gentrification on North American cities has not been that great” (Yeates, 1998, p.405).

When faced with statements such as this remarkable generalisation based on one piece of work (Bourne, 1993b), one wonders whether recent calls for contextuality in gentrification theorisation (Lees, 1994a, 2000; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Ley, 1996a) can be directed towards the apparent ‘continentalism’ in earlier comparative urban research between Canada and the United States. The concept of a ‘North American City’ was advocated by Yeates and Garner (1976), who drew attention to the similarities between Canadian and American cities and viewed North America’s urban system as a homogeneous unit driven by ‘North American values’. The most recent edition of this text (Yeates, 1998) states that the viewpoint is “a *spatial* one, with the objective of linking the social, economic and political processes to an understanding of urban patterns” (p.2) in a continental context. This is a textbook which has been used to inform undergraduate minds for a quarter of a century, something that would no doubt bother Goldberg and Mercer (1986, p.xv) who saw the continentalist perspective as highly misleading in practice, reflecting their

“intellectual concerns with constructs that blithely lump Canada and the United States into the same analytical laundry basket without proper appreciation of the diversity of the wardrobe to be laundered.In Canada, where an American-style urban dilemma has still to be demonstrated....a borrowing of inappropriate and enormously costly policies seemed to us singularly unintelligent”.

Following some short personal recollections of their experiences living and working in cities of both countries, where they had observed significant differences in many spheres of urban life, they continued their assault on continentalism with an ambitious, wide-ranging analysis of metropolitan areas across both countries. The engine driving their argument that the 'North American City' was a 'myth' was the idea that "cities evolve within the cultural framework of the societies in which they are located" (p.5). This cultural determinism could be interpreted as a reaction to the economic determinism which had dominated urban geography for much of the 1960s and 1970s. For Goldberg and Mercer, economic institutions and systems were governed by changing cultural values, not vice versa as much previous work had suggested. Through this cultural context, the authors concluded that 'the Canadian city' and 'the American city' were strongly differentiated between *and* within each other in terms of values and social settings, types of political and economic systems and institutions, and urban form, transportation and population:

"There is such rich variation in both city sets to suggest that, while generalization might be possible with respect to certain dimensions, one must be extremely cautious about making sweeping statements concerning either city set, let alone both sets together. Overgeneralization is too common in urban studies and, more generally, the social sciences" (p.254).

As Mercer argued in a later work (1991, p.46):

"Despite...broad similarities, the concept of a North American model of urban form masks and excludes significant differences in housing; in transportation systems and usage, in social geographies, and in institutional structures".

Many Canadian urban geographers have continued to embrace the notion that Canadian cities are distinct entities with clear differences from their American and also European counterparts (see Bourne and Ley, 1993; Bunting and Filion, 2000). Indeed, one piece of quantitative empirical work published shortly after Goldberg and Mercer's original critique demonstrated that American-derived concepts of the inner-city are simply untenable when applied to a Canadian inner-city context (Filion, 1987).

In the context of gentrification, an article by Cybriwsky, Ley and Western (1986) serves as a useful example of the kind of arguments which gave rise to the critique of continentalism. Comparing the political and social context of gentrification in Society Hill, Philadelphia, USA, with False Creek, Vancouver, Canada, they argued that despite the contrasting histories of each city, a common theme emerged with respect to the conditions that gave rise to gentrification. The result is a North American model of gentrification which seems to downplay the fact that these are two very different cities in two very different countries:

“All in all, however, one can observe in the contrasting studies presented here a single pervasive theme: the undeniable impact that a small number of individuals can have in guiding – or even partly reversing – established urban trends” (Cybriwsky, Ley and Western, 1986, p.119).

At first glance it would seem ironic that a current proponent of a ‘geography of gentrification’ and a sharp critic of overgeneralised arguments (Ley) was involved, a decade earlier, in the communication of a totalising explanation of gentrification. However, when one considers the liberal humanism with which Ley and his colleagues were engaged, where the ‘peopling’ of human geography in response to spatial analysis and the quantitative revolution led to a more sensitive incorporation of human agency into geographical research (Cloke, Philo and Sadler, 1991), the irony subsides – it was these authors’ common epistemological backgrounds which impacted their interpretations. The “small number of individuals” in their discussion represent the ‘peopling’ of gentrification theory and practice. The lesson to be learned here is that a geography of gentrification must be sensitive to the epistemological foundations of the authors who are involved in interpreting that geography, as this is an article which studies gentrification in two very different cities yet produces an explanation which reinforces the idea of similarities in urban change in a ‘North American’ city.

The work of Goldberg and Mercer on the ‘myth’ of the North American City has not been without its critics. The sharpest objections came from Garber and Imbroscio (1996), who believed that the emphasis given by Goldberg and Mercer to the obvious differences between Canadian and American cities had obscured more subtle distinctions (such as the heavy influence of provincial government in

Canadian cities⁵) and also some crucial similarities in urban (local) governance that exist between the two nations (most notably in the form of inducement-based growth strategies such as boosterism). Although they did not reject the ‘myth’ of the North American City, Garber and Imbroscio argued that we should reconsider the ways we go about constructing difference, and contended that the cultural approach alone was an inappropriate tool with which to undertake comparative research into the mechanisms of urban governance:

“Cultural theory obscures certain similarities in how Canadian and U.S. cities are governed, and ironically, given its aims, it does not fully explain the source and nature of the genuine differences in governance that exist” (p.597).

This comes across as a valid critique, especially in terms of policy-oriented research and in the way they advocated an approach to comparative analysis which concentrates on ‘local constitutional regimes’ (specifically the legal definition of cities, private property and federalism). However, there is another way that Goldberg and Mercer’s work can be criticised which escaped the attention of Garber and Imbroscio, and this is their use of binary oppositions as structurally independent variables. Differences between American and Canadian cities were elaborated by Goldberg and Mercer through the deployment of binary oppositions such as mosaics versus melting pots; evolution versus revolution; federalism versus regionalism; public versus private enterprise, to name a few. Take for example the table of binaries (Table 1) which appears in their book:

⁵ This particular criticism is problematic when one considers the clarity with which Goldberg and Mercer illuminated precisely what Garber and Imbroscio argue that they ignored – “the institutional arrangements that give the provinces primary responsibility for shaping economic development policy” (p.617). Goldberg and Mercer (p.128-9) state that “it should be noted that these differences [between Canadian and American metropolitan areas] derive in no small way from the differences in political institutions and values..... Canadian provinces have been much more willing and able to impose metropolitan government than have American states”.

Table 1: Select features of Canadian and American society explored by Goldberg and Mercer (1986). Source: Goldberg and Mercer, 1986, p.14.

<u>CANADA</u>		<u>AMERICA</u>
Deferential Behaviour	vs.	Assertive Behaviour
Collective	vs.	'Frontier Individualism
Respect for Authority	vs.	Distrust of Authority
Elitist/Oligarchic	vs.	Egalitarian/Democratic
Self-restraint	vs.	Self-indulgence
Social Liberalism	vs.	Economic Conservatism
Cautious/Evolutionary	vs.	Dynamic/Experimental
Peace/Order/Good Government	vs.	Pursuit of Happiness

This particular approach to undertaking comparative research owes much to the earlier work of the functional sociologist Seymour M. Lipset, an important advocate of intensive, broad-scale research into American-Canadian relations (e.g. Lipset, 1990). Although Goldberg and Mercer maintain that their project is “not an endorsement on our part of this particular school of sociology” (p.15), like Lipset they neglect to pay much attention to the relationships between these oppositions and how they can contribute to urban discursive formations. Conclusions drawn from the table above lose their authority when we consider the words of Sayer (1991), who argues that it would be surprising if everything in the world “conveniently happened to be two-sided” – the power and danger of dualistic thinking is its ability to “polarise whole fields of concepts, especially when aligned in parallel so that they reinforce one another” (p.284-5). The possibility that the Canadian characteristics above exist to counter the American characteristics was never satisfactorily explored. However, a consideration of the asymmetrical relationship that exists between Canada and America in economic, social, cultural and political terms (where America is clearly a great influence on Canadian urban life but very rarely vice versa) would be a substantial research project of its own, and difficult to convey solely with the use of statistical evidence. In addition, this neglect reflects the time

when this text was researched and written, when discursive practices were not a major research theme in social science and poststructuralist sensibilities were yet to pervade academic inquiry.

In what might be viewed as a sign of the times, Mercer, writing with Kim England in a recent update of his 1991 essay, shows an increased sensitivity to the asymmetrical relationship:

“Canadians continue to desire to differentiate themselves from their huge neighbour despite increased and closer economic integration. It is undeniable that the US now serves as the primary reference and point of comparison – Canada’s other” (Mercer and England, 2000, p.71).

These words are akin to recent work which has focused on Canadian cities in relation to American cities. A paper by Lees and Demeritt (1998) serves as an instructive example of the benefit of looking at the *interplay* of binary oppositions in the discursive construction of a specifically ‘American’ and specifically ‘Canadian’ city. They identified the ways in which negative images of the American city (which they term ‘Sin City’ discourse) are used to motivate the regeneration and gentrification of the Canadian city (constructing a ‘Sim City’ discourse) and used the example of that archetypal ‘liveable’ city, Vancouver, to substantiate their claims for a sensitivity to context rather than the fusing of common elements into a continental perspective. These oppositional discourses are shown to capture the imagination of the public “through powerful and *materially productive* practices of representation” (p.335, emphasis added), which “not only reflect something of its present reality but also produce that reality in its own image” (p.352). The media are in part responsible for communicating and sustaining these representations, something which has been clarified by Ruddick in the context of the construction of social difference:

“When discussing the imagery that underlies the relational construction of racialized groups in the Canadian media, one cannot ignore the role the American media plays as an implicit and explicit reference point. Even when the Canadian context is understood to be different.....a chain of equivalence often is drawn before it is debunked, and pains are then taken to establish distinction and difference. General discussions about Canadian-ness that arose in the 1960s and early 1970s took pains to distinguish the Canadian mosaic from the American melting pot.....Or, in other reporting, attention to the growing ‘gang problem’ in Canadian cities or rising violence in schools is

accompanied by extended debates about the similarities and differences within the American experience” (Ruddick, 1996, p.142).

Ruddick’s words illustrate two things, first, that the concept of the North American City can be questioned from the quite different perspective of representation, and second, that discursive constructions as seen through the media are asymmetrical *relational* constructions, not binaries which sit at opposite ends of a discursive scale without any interaction with each other.

So, what Goldberg and Mercer did not show between Canadian and American cities was that

“images of decay....and images of civility are not simply contrasting; they are mutually constitutive. As a binary opposition, the meaning of one depends on the other” (Lees and Demeritt, 1998, p.335).

With respect to the gentrification literature, one of the more striking binary oppositions that emerges from extensive reading is the ‘revanchist city’ discourse versus the ‘emancipatory city’ discourse, the former emerging largely from the study of American city gentrification, the latter emerging largely from the study of Canadian city gentrification. By ‘discourse’ I mean “a specific series of representations...through which meanings are produced, connected into networks and legitimised” (Gregory, 2000, p.180). The discourses offer very different perspectives on gentrification which are in part due to the city and the country from which they emerged. It is not a novel observation to note that intellectual constructions can seldom be divorced from the contexts in which they are conceived and articulated, but with respect to the gentrification literature, this has received limited attention. Theoretical contexts must be placed under closer inspection if both a geography of gentrification and the debate over ‘continentalism’ are to be developed, and our understandings of the nuances of urban change furthered. One must, however, bear in mind an important caveat - contextuality and a geography of gentrification are not one and the same. Rather, *it is through a sensitivity to context that the geography of gentrification is illuminated*, and the contexts which led to the production of these discourses are as important as the authors behind their

articulation. It is now time for a review and critical assessment of both discourses in turn, before explaining their dependence on each other.

2.6 The revanchist city discourse: gentrification as villain

“But when in American history has there not been a fear of the city – and especially on the part of those who did not have to live in it?” (Kazin, 1983, p.6).

Anti-urbanism is a common condition among American intellectuals (White and White, 1962; Kazin, 1983; Beauregard, 1993). From Thomas Jefferson to Ralph Waldo Emerson to Lewis Mumford, the most authoritative and intellectual voices in America have exhibited a distrust and dislike of urban places, sometimes a profound fear which has had a pervasive effect:

“Not only has the anti-urbanism of our intellectual tradition directly influenced the popular mind, but the tradition has probably had an even greater effect on ordinary Americans as it has been transmitted by writers who flourish somewhere between the highest reaches of our culture and the popular mind” (White and White, 1962, p.203).

The most recent exploration of the material effects of this fear of the city has come from the pen of Neil Smith (1996), who directed his attentions towards forging a link between gentrification and a new form of anti-urbanism, which he has termed the ‘revanchist city’. This troublesome word has its roots in nineteenth-century French history - revanchists were a group of middle-class nationalist reactionaries opposed to the working-class uprising of the Paris Commune, intent on taking revenge (‘revanche’) on those who had ‘stolen’ the city from them. Smith sees a similarity between this and the gentrification of the American inner-city in the 1990s (especially New York City), which he views as “a reaction against the supposed ‘theft’ of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighbourhood security” (p.211) where “white middle-class assumptions about civil society retrench as a narrow set of social norms against which everyone else⁶ is found dangerously wanting” (p.230). For Smith, gentrification is the spatial expression of the revanchist

⁶ ‘Everyone else’ incorporates “minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants” (p.211).

attitude of the white middle-classes - a menacing, displacing 'frontier' that threatens to redefine the social fabric of the central city.

Two important factors fuel the fire of revanchism; first, the collapse of the 1980s 'stretch-limo optimism' into the bleak prospects of the early 1990s recession, which triggered unprecedented anger amongst the white middle-classes. Smith demonstrates that such anger needed a target on which to exercise revenge, and the easiest target was the subordinated, marginalised populations of the inner-city. The following sentence explains:

"More than anything the revanchist city expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites who are suddenly stuck in place by a ravaged property market, the threat and reality of unemployment, the decimation of social services, and the emergence of minority and immigrant groups, as well as women, as powerful urban actors" (p.211).

Second, Smith states that revanchism is 'screamingly reaffirmed' by symbolic representations of urban malaise in television and the media in "an obsessive portrayal of the violence and danger of everyday life" (p.211). Such is the influence of these (re)productions of paranoia and fear that the phenomenon has pervaded the political administration of New York City - the revanchist attitude has been adopted by those in power to maintain control over the spaces of the 'Other' in the inner-city (Papayanis, 2000). As Smith pointed out in later works (Smith, 1998, 1999, 2001) neo-liberal revanchism in the 1990s under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani filled the vacuum left by the failure of 1980s liberal urban policy in New York City, and was consolidated by blaming the failures of earlier liberal policy on the disadvantaged populations such policy was supposed to assist:

"Rather than indict capitalists for capital flight, landlords for abandoned buildings, or public leaders for a narrow retrenchment to class and race self-interest in the assertion of budget priorities, Giuliani led the clamor for a different kind of revenge. He identified homeless people, panhandlers, prostitutes, squeegee cleaners, squatters, graffiti artists, 'reckless bicyclists', and unruly youth as the major enemies of 'public order and public decency', the culprits of urban decline for generating widespread fear" (Smith, 2001, p.73).

A particularly mean spirited and repressive attitude towards these populations, as exemplified by the well-publicised 'zero tolerance' policies of Giuliani's police force, has been playing out in particularly racist and classist ways in New York. By clearing the streets of 'undesirable' elements, Giuliani prepped entire neighbourhoods for gentrification (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Curran, 2001). As the city's economy recovered in the 1990s, the crime rate dropped, and public spaces such as Times Square were privatised and commodified, New York City became a sanitised vacation destination, an arena for lavish middle-class consumption – yet the people who had to be swept away and/or incarcerated to allow this to happen were ignored under the fanfare of success attributed to a charismatic but very brutal mayor.

Smith's work is an important and exciting commentary on current *American* anti-urban sensibilities, with gentrification described as the consummate expression of revanchism. The relationship between local and global forces with respect to gentrification is the cornerstone of his work. Smith is a staunch advocate of a concept crystallised by Gregory, that "places are local condensations and distillations of tremulous global processes that travel through them" (Gregory, 1994, p.122), but it is here that some difficulties arise from his perspective on gentrification. He applies the concept to his revanchist city argument, suggesting that it is a global phenomenon with a local expression when his case studies (mostly American cities) would suggest otherwise:

"[I]f the US in some ways represents the most intense experience of a new urban revanchism, it is a much more widespread experience...*gentrification and the revanchist city find a common conjuncture in the restructured urban geography of the late capitalist city*. The details of each conflict and of each situation may be different, but a broad commonality of contributing processes and conditions set the stage" (Smith, 1996, p.46-47, emphasis added).

The 'broad commonality' argument seems to exemplify an ungainly aspect of some Marxist commentaries - the deployment of 'travelling theory' (Gregory, 1994, p.9-14) to substantiate declamatory musings on the evils of a personified capitalism. It is, I believe, vitally important to view the revanchist city as a recent intensification of the fear of the city in *American* culture (White and White, 1962; Kazin, 1983;

Beauregard, 1993) – the latest chapter in a long tale of middle-class suspicion and prejudice towards urban America (Slater, 2002b). One of America's foremost literary critics elaborates:

“What has happened is that fear of the city on the part of those who live in it has caught up with the fear on the part of those who did not have to live in it. American fear of the city....persists, and added to it nowadays – since all concern with the city is concern with class – has been fear of the ‘underclass’, of blacks, of the youth gangs that first emerged in the mid-fifties.....To the hosts of the uprooted and disordered in the city, hypnotized by the images of violence increasingly favored by the media, the city is nothing but a state of war” (Kazin, 1983, p.11).

Mele (2000b) sees the intensification of fear to have begun two decades later, in the 1970s aftermath of 1960s urban unrest, where “the phrase *urban crisis*....came to represent middle-class hopelessness and apprehension toward a city perceived to be unsalvageable and filled with impoverished, threatening, and mostly minority residents” (p.181). Here we must recognise that White and White, Kazin, Beauregard and Mele write about the historical development of a particular kind of *American* (anti)urbanism. Smith's proposal that revanchist anti-urbanism is a global feature of the late capitalist city sidelines the very tangible attachment to urban life felt in non-American cities without sizzling anti-urban sentiment fed by symbolic representations of urban decline - thus Smith comes across as somewhat insensitive to different urban situations away from his fieldwork sites. As I write this I am aware that anti-urbanism is not, of course, exclusive to the American psyche. For example, Raymond Williams (1973) memorably pointed out the tangible anti-urbanism in Britain, fuelled by literary and artistic representations of the miasmatic industrial city in Britain, and always in contrast to the tranquillity of the countryside. However, we must recognise that anti-urbanism is more acute in the United States, a major force behind the suburbanisation which continues apace across the nation.

Smith's (1996) book does include some overviews of European city gentrification (Paris, Amsterdam and Budapest) but beneath his rousing prose it is hard to imagine how this revanchist discourse has applicability to these and other late-capitalist cities if it is defined in terms of the anti-urbanism he discusses. The issue of its applicability to one particular context has been taken up empirically in an excellent paper by MacLeod (2002), who traced the extent to which revanchism has permeated

the place-marketing and 'entrepreneurial' strategies behind the recent revamp of central Glasgow. His conclusions provide support to my suspicion of the widespread anti-urban foundations of revanchism, and he points to "the need for caution when comparing Glasgow with a city like New York", explaining that

"in contrast to New York and indeed certain British cities..., the Strathclyde Police Force....has introduced a Street Liaison Team, which, rather than immediately criminalizing street people and prostitutes, aims to cultivate improved relations between those 'on the margins of society,' the police, and the wider public" (p.616).

Further to this marked contrast in policing, MacLeod argues that a range of policy schemes designed to assist marginalized populations in Glasgow

"appear to be at odds with the repressive moments of vengeance inscribed into New York's local state strategy. Stretching this a little further, can we point to Glasgow's gentrification wars (police militia, sweeping helicopters), or its military-style sweeps on quality-of-life offenders and its vengeful political attacks on the city's universities? *As yet, the answer to these questions remains a tentative 'no' "* (p.616, emphasis added).

Above all, MacLeod urges us to "acknowledge that 'actually existing' revanchist political economies will assume different forms in different contexts" (p.617). He does not therefore reject the revanchist city thesis – in fact, he views it as "a deeply suggestive heuristic with which to reassess the changing geographical contours of a city's restless urban landscape" (p.616). If we consider revanchism in these terms - the ways in which political, class and cultural tensions in inner cities are reflections of public policies designed to discipline certain groups of people - rather than as the latest expression of American anti-urbanism, the discourse does have applicability to other cities. For example, Atkinson (2001) has shown the revanchism behind the zero-tolerance policing of public spaces in urban Scotland, and Mitchell (1998a, 1998b) has shown the revanchism behind a number of brutal 'anti-homeless laws' in selected American cities. In my view, however, a broader consideration of revanchism does *not* legitimate Smith's overgeneralised and unsupported claim that gentrification as a form of revanchist anti-urbanism is common to *all* late-capitalist cities.

A second difficulty I have with Smith's work is the way in which a New York City neighbourhood is represented. The soapbox language Smith (1996) uses to put forward his revanchist city argument has the effect of contributing to the anti-urbanism of which he is so resentful. Take, for example, the following extracts:

"Gentrification portends a class conquest of the city. The new urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working-class geography and history" (p.26-27).

"In the 1990s, an unabated litany of crime and violence, drugs and unemployment, immigration and depravity – all laced through with terror – now scripts an unabashed revanchism of the city" (p.211).

"The revanchist city represents a reaction to an urbanism defined by the recurrent waves of unremitting danger and brutality fuelled by venal and uncontrolled passion" (p.212).

"The revanchist city is, to be sure, a dual and divided city of wealth and poverty, and it will continue to be so as seemingly apocalyptic visions of urban fissure....appear more and more realistic. But it is more. It is a divided city where the victors are increasingly defensive of their privilege, such as it is, and increasingly vicious defending it" (p.227).

Through the language which Smith uses to exemplify the revanchist script and make a useful and, I believe, accurate protest at a reactionary and exclusionary form of urban politics, he has painted a picture of an inner city New York which is far from accurate, and fallen victim to the 'crisis of representation' which has bothered geographers since the cultural turn in the discipline. After reading Smith's book, a visitor to the Lower East Side today would expect to find it in a state of class war, a microcosm of a decimated city that has become a fortress of 'haves' protected from angry 'have nots', a place where we can see the alarming and upsetting inequalities and injustices of rampant gentrification. But today the reality is a very different Lower East Side without the level of tension which caused the 1988 unrest in Tompkins Square Park. While this is partly due to gentrification and the morally indefensible displacement of the poor (the outcome of the revenge), one would be hard pressed to find the neighbourhood which Smith describes with such vigour and anger, even if there are noticeable class differences. It is thus important, I believe, to understand that revanchist anti-urbanism is as much *the discursive construction of its author*, bolstered by the power of representation and written at an unsettling time in

the history of one New York neighbourhood, as it is a commentary on a form of urban politics seemingly devoid of compassion and inclusion.

One crucial question arises from Smith's work which, for all its thoroughness and eloquence, is never answered. Where *should* the middle-classes live? Smith is absolutely against gentrification in any form or place, but would he rather that middle-classes all lived in gated communities in bland suburban conformity?⁷ His comrade in arms, David Harvey, has recently explored the fabric of 'bourgeois utopias' of the suburbs and 'yuppie utopias' of the inner city in Baltimore, where he is more critical of the former, lamenting the ecological impacts and the suburban 'anchoring' of the "peculiar mix of political conservatism and social libertarianism that is the hallmark of contemporary America" (Harvey, 2000, p.138). On the latter, many would be surprised to learn that Harvey is not entirely critical:

"when 'gentrification' in the classical sense of displacement of low-income populations has occurred.....it has at least physically revitalized parts of the city that were slowly dying from neglect" (p.141).

However, both Harvey and Smith would probably argue that rampant gentrification, *inter alia*, makes inner-city areas gated, bland and conforming, just like the suburbs. But the question remains - what would happen if a neighbourhood was left in a 'trough' of disinvestment? Smith touches on this in a discussion of the gentrification of Harlem:

"It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that for Central Harlem residents, gentrification is a 'Catch-22'. Without private rehabilitation and redevelopment, the neighbourhood's housing stock will remain severely dilapidated; with it, a large number of Central Harlem residents will ultimately be displaced and will not benefit from the better and more expensive housing" (Smith, 1996, p.163).

It is not that we seek Smith to provide us with an alternative to gentrification, but the 'Catch-22' argument, along with the general besmirchment of capitalism, does seem to obscure what the ideal non-gentrified Marxist city might look like. Surely the ideal cannot be one of disinvestment, of abandonment, arson, crime and poverty? It is interesting to compare Smith's work with that of Kasinitz (1988), a sociologist

⁷ I am grateful to James DeFilippis for this astute observation (personal communication, May 2001).

who undertook qualitative work in the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Boerum Hill. In the early 1960s, Boerum Hill was suffering from systematic disinvestment and the associated dramatic drop in overall population, as one of Kasinitz's interviewees revealed:

"Nobody wanted to live in the kind of neighbourhood this was in 1965, including I might add, most of the people living here at the time. You had to get the sociopaths out. The neighbourhood had to be changed" (quoted on p.167).

While Kasinitz is sensitive to critical work such as Smith's on 'urban pioneers' who try to 'civilize the frontier', the following words are crucial:

"[T]he political and economic context of Boerum Hill may have made the victory of the 'settlers' inevitable. In the early 1960s, Boerum Hill was listed by the City of New York as a 'high demolition' area. In the city-owned property, even minor problems were being solved by the bulldozer. The widespread belief that the area was soon to be levelled for urban renewal or highway construction had accelerated disinvestment. Most of the 'Brownstoners'⁸ were in agreement that unless new middle-class homeowners could be attracted, the area would soon cease to exist. Therefore, strategies were adopted to convince the world that Boerum Hill 'existed' and was worthy of being maintained" (p.167-8).

While gentrification later went too far and there was considerable protest against rising rents, tenant harassment and displacement (see p.174-6), the case of Boerum Hill makes some *initial* gentrification appear desirable – otherwise there might be no Boerum Hill today. Smith would probably argue that the whole process has been a conspiracy against the poor by public and private sector actors – the devalorisation of land (redlining, blockbusting) setting up opportunities for reinvestment and resettlement by middle-classes. However, in this neighbourhood, unchecked devalorisation may have led to total destruction.

I do not wish to retreat into the old debate over whether Smith is right or wrong – the point here is to illustrate that his trenchant critique of gentrification under the noisy rhetoric of the revanchist city has suppressed crucial questions of what might be the

⁸ This refers to the Boerum Hill Association, a small group of new homeowners who renovated housing in the neighbourhood.

case if gentrification had not taken place, or if gentrification was to end tomorrow. Merrifield (2000) sums up this problem for Marxist scholarship as follows:

“The Left has to fend off and contest Zero Tolerance tactics while it tries to formulate what the city of tolerance might look and feel and function like. ...Those of us on the Left who yearn for social justice, but who also love cities, find ourselves torn between the tyranny we see around us every day and the thrill that same tyrannical city can sometimes offer. How can alternative visions and strategies be devised that can promote the latter while negating the former?” (p.485).

I would argue that it is as much a methodological issue as a philosophical/ideological issue. Smith’s work is a lesson in historical materialism, with some assessment of policy documents, content analysis of media reports, and data on tax delinquency to explain gentrification. However, one is left wondering what the revanchist city argument might look like if his approach was more inclusive of primary qualitative methods – where a voice is given to those who he feels are excluded, or even to those who he chastises for their dirty acts of gentrification. The issue of methodology will be explored in the next chapter, but it is crucial to recognise here that it was a major factor in the production and articulation of the revanchist city discourse.

I have spent some time discussing Smith’s work because it is arguably the most powerful, and certainly most prolific, portrayal of gentrification as a fundamentally negative process. However, he is not alone in his vilification of gentrification in American cities. A large number of other researchers are in concert with his viewpoint that gentrification is a serious injustice that makes the American city more unequal than it already is, restructuring its geography along extant divisions of class and race and further dividing it into a maelstrom of privilege and underprivilege. While ‘revanchism’ per se may not be the explanatory framework in other work, the theme of revenge is seemingly omnipresent in the literature on American gentrification. It is a literature too vast to summarise here, but it is useful to introduce a few studies which demonstrate that Smith’s portrayals of gentrification as revenge do not stand alone, and that there are several other “exponents of a genre of urban commentary best described as the critical eulogy” (Merrifield, 2000, p.474).

Abu-Lughod’s richly detailed (1994) narrative of the East Village in New York is a case in point. Bringing together several essays on the neighbourhood in an edited

collection, her sombre conclusions lament the difficulty of resistance, the destruction of community and the loss of place under the revengeful gentrification that occurred there in the 1980s:

“Not every defense of a neighborhood succeeds and, we must admit, not every successful defense succeeds in all ways....if the attacks against it are too powerful, the community can eventually lose its vitality and verve.[I]t is also easier for government to destroy community than to nurture this intangible element of the human spirit. To some extent, while the developers and most particularly, the long arm of the law of the City of New York that aided and abetted them, failed to convert this portion of an old quarter into a paradise for yuppies, they succeeded, at least for the time being, in killing much of the precious spirit of the neighborhood. The funereal pall that in 1991 hung over the community is the legacy of their efforts” (Abu-Lughod, 1994, p.340).

A further portrayal of revengeful gentrification comes from Robinson (1995), in his vivid account of grassroots resistance to the international economic restructuring behind the gentrification of San Francisco’s Tenderloin district. While much of the focus of this article is on the emergence, consolidation and tactics of such resistance, Robinson is quick to attack the middle-classes and their institutions:

“San Francisco’s realtors have noted that the Tenderloin is the last underdeveloped area within striking distance of corporate downtown.... A variety of upscale developments threatened the Tenderloin.... A danger to current neighborhood character arises when such developments show success and inspire even greater numbers of new developments. This process could ultimately lead to a middle- and upper-class consolidation in the Tenderloin’s border areas – a consolidation that could be a starting point for further upscale invasions” (Robinson, 1995, p.489).

Moving to gentrification in another large US city, Chicago, Betancur (2002) has recently written about the “tremendous disruption” (p.780) of working class Puerto Rican community life caused by the gentrification of the West Town neighbourhood. Arson, abandonment, displacement, “speculation and abuse”, tenant hardships and class conflict are woven into a mournful tale of struggle, loss, and above all, “the bitterness of the process and the open hostility/racism of gentrifiers and their organizations toward Puerto Ricans” (p.802):

“Much of West Town is now gentrified. Even entrenched minority, low-income clusters have seen gentrification push through their borders. Churches, service organizations, schools and institutions have been affected by it. Their numbers have dwindled or their constituencies changed. Many small

churches have closed; public school enrolment has decreased in the most gentrified sections, and higher income children are taking over local private schools” (p.792).

Betancur’s assault on the gentrifiers rises to a crescendo near the end of his paper, where the current situation is chillingly presented, and gentrification almost personified:

“The ethnic enclaves that managed to hold on through the years are also falling prey to gentrification – especially as their now senior population dies. As gentrification advances, the community continues resisting the ever-stronger blows coming from the forces of gentrification” (p.805).

Gentrification is Goliath, the community is David, yet Betancur places so much blame on the gentrifiers that we doubt David’s chances in bringing down his monstrous enemy.

The overwhelmingly negative, revengeful discourse which has emerged from the study of gentrification in American cities must come with an important caveat: it is not just from American research that gentrification is portrayed as revengeful. While researchers in America present the most disturbing accounts of the evils of exclusionary inner-city reinvestment, academic accounts of gentrification from cities in other countries, including Canada, exhibit much in the way of revanchism. For example, few, if any, scholars researching gentrification in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside have ever spoken of gentrification as anything other than a serious problem created by revengeful urban policy (e.g. Blomley, 1997; Sommers, 1998; Blomley and Pratt, 2001), and more recently, displacement in London has been blamed partly on tenant harassment of ‘undesirables’ that goes unreported (Atkinson, 2000a). The literature is too vast to summarise, but when considered as a collective, Atkinson (2002) elaborates:

“On the issue of neighbourhood impacts it can be seen that the majority of research evidence on gentrification points to its detrimental effects..... [R]esearch which has sought to understand its impacts has predominantly found problems and social costs. This suggests a displacement and moving around of social problems rather than a net gain either through local taxes, improved physical environment or a reduction in the demand for sprawling urban development. Even where positive effects have been identified, these are widely considered to be relatively small compared to the downside” (p.20-1).

It is difficult to estimate how far this is something of a snowball effect, whereby highly influential ‘critical eulogies’ such as Neil Smith’s impact the frameworks and perspectives of other scholars, but I suspect that it is a significant piece of the puzzle. To be sure, there is much that is socially and politically contestable about gentrification, and displacement is a very serious outcome that triggers much academic engagement with, and scorn of, the process. It is interesting, though, that other influential scholars working mainly in Canadian contexts have not sided with the viewpoint that gentrification is an unmitigated, revengeful evil. It is to some of these scholars that I now turn.

2.7 The emancipatory city discourse: gentrification as saviour

The ‘emancipatory city’ discourse (termed by Lees, 2000) stands in direct contrast to the revanchist city discourse. If we take the latter to be a representation of gentrification as an unjust urban process, a visceral reaction by the middle-classes and the policy fortress, the former offers a quite different representation of gentrification as the saviour of the city, quintessentially a positive process of class transformation. To the architects of the discourse, gentrification is seen as a process which unites people in the central city, creates opportunities for social interaction, tolerance and cultural diversity. The work of Caulfield (1989, 1994) on the gentrification of Toronto, Canada, is where Lees first identified this discourse and sees it to be at its most explicit. She points out that Caulfield “focuses on the inner city as an emancipatory space and gentrification as an emancipatory social practice” (Lees, 2000, p.393), and portrayed gentrification as a ‘liberating’ experience for those involved. First I will discuss the work of Caulfield, and particularly its connections to David Ley’s arguments, to reveal the Canadian context from which this discourse emerged, before discussing some other works which can be included in the emancipatory vein.

Caulfield argues that gentrification in Toronto is a ‘critical social practice’, a reaction to the repressive institutions of the suburbs:

“city people....express their feelings....where they are able, individually and collectively, to pursue practices eluding the domination of social and cultural structures and constituting new conditions for experience. For the marginal middle class, resettlement of old city neighbourhoods is among these activities” (Caulfield, 1989, p.624).

Perhaps the crux of his approach to gentrification is that “affection for old city places may be rooted not in longing for flight to the past but for a subjectively effective present, not in desire for routine but to *escape* routine” (p.624). For Caulfield, 1970s gentrification was a rejection of suburban values, “a rupture in dominant canons of urban meaning and a cluster of social practices, carried out in the context of everyday life, oriented toward reconstituting the meanings of old city neighbourhoods towards an alternative urban future” (1994, p.109). The 1970s middle-class resettlement of Toronto was a highly critical reaction (a ‘critical social practice’) to the city’s post-war modernist development and growth-boosterism, part of what became known as the ‘reform’ movement of the 1970s (see also Caulfield, 1988). Both urban radicals *and* conservatives in Toronto were dismayed at the municipal government’s 1950s and 1960s prioritisation of suburban expansion at the expense of inner-city areas. Four clusters of actors – traditional city dwellers at each social stratum, the emerging generation of urban planners and professionals⁹, young and highly educated political and cultural activists, and the city’s growing middle class – joined forces and became a large majority in the reorientation of Toronto’s development away from the suburbs back towards the central city (Caulfield, 1994, p.66-75). This last group of actors, the gentrifiers of Toronto, were seen by Caulfield to be involved in a deliberate operation of resistance to the dominant ideals of suburban life. The ‘new conditions for experience’ set up by gentrification sketched a path not simply for larger urban redevelopment schemes, but for the consolidation of a new ‘postmodern urbanism’ (Mills, 1988; Knox, 1993; Ley and Mills, 1993). This perspective has more than a few echoes of the work of David Ley, who argued that gentrification in Canadian cities was initiated by a nascent marginal counter-culture, where ‘hippies became yuppies’ and sought inner-city spaces in an ‘expressive ideology’ against the dominant 1950s and 1960s ‘instrumentalist ideology’ (Ley, 1980, p.242). It is essential to bear in mind that these are arguments

⁹ This group of actors were heavily influenced by the attack on modernism – and promotion of inner urban neighbourhoods – by Jane Jacobs, who decamped to Toronto from New York in the 1970s and successfully resisted the construction of the Spadina Expressway through the centre of the city.

that have emerged from neighbourhood research *in Canadian cities*; yet because of the protracted theoretical debate which has dominated gentrification research in the past, the contextual roots of the emancipatory discourse have been submerged by much more concern over whether Ley's explanation of gentrification is right or wrong.

Ley's more recent work adds weight to the emancipatory discourse in its Canadian context. One particular discussion (Ley, 1994), motivated by his questioning of numerous American city arguments which alluded to a conservative 'adversarial politics' among middle-class gentrifiers, provided empirical evidence from the three largest Canadian cities (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) to demonstrate that the principal gentrifying districts in each city in fact contained an electorate which predominantly sided with more liberal, socially inclusive 'reform politics'. For Ley, reform politics exhibit

"closer management of growth and development, improved public services, notably housing and transportation, more open government with various degrees of neighbourhood empowerment, and greater attention to such amenity issues as heritage, public open space, and cultural and leisure facilities" (Ley, 1994, p.59-60).

Most importantly, in all three cities studied by Ley there was "no significant tendency overall for social upgrading in the city centre to be associated with [adversarial] conservative politics" (p.70). Here we must recognise two things: first, the fact that the evidence presented by Ley and Caulfield reflects a Canadian gentrification pattern at a particular point in the political and urban geographical history of Canada (the post-1968 reform era, although Ley's work also focuses on the 1990s); and second, that there is a remarkable contrast in the nature of middle-class politics in a gentrification context between Canada and America. The accounts of the gentrifying middle class and their political concerns for social justice and 'quality of life' for all citizens put forward by these authors are fundamentally different to the mean-spirited, exclusive and zero-tolerance attitudes of the gentrifying middle class which are so lamented by scholars researching neighbourhood change in some American cities.

Ley's remarkably detailed and thorough analysis of gentrification in Canadian cities (Ley, 1996a) reveals a legacy from the counter-cultural youth movements of the 1960s, whose "values diffused and evolved among receptive and much larger segments of the professional middle class..." (p.210). These values were ones of disdain for the blandness and monotony of suburban living, for the mass organisation and repetition of post-war Fordism and its perceived crushing of individualism and difference. Gentrification proceeded because inner-city neighbourhoods were seen to be sites of resistance, or

"oppositional spaces: socially diverse, welcoming difference, tolerant, creative, valuing the old, the hand-crafted, the personalized, countering hierarchical lines of authority" (p.210).

The 'hippies' who led the resistance were followed by what Ley calls "consecutive waves of the new middle class", who viewed place as "a credential, a mark of distinction in the constitution of an identity separate from the constellation of place and identity shaped by the suburbs" (p.211). Although Ley is not unaware of the realities of displacement and what we might refer to as the flipside of gentrification, the emancipatory discourse is to some extent fashioned by his own work and his extensive reviews of other studies of Canadian gentrification, which are blended into a narrative where the Canadian inner city is represented as "a place of sensuous encounter, to be experienced and possessed" (p.208), where a "remarkable pot-pourri of artistic, spiritual and social-science fragments" (p.182) collide in a "feast of conviviality" which thrives on "the sharpening of the moment, the will-to-immediacy through sensation, tactile, visual, aural" (p.338).

At this stage it could be argued that, ironically, I have slid into the same Ley versus Smith quagmire from which I wish to escape – Ley painting a prettier picture of gentrification than the aforementioned inner-city malice presented by Smith. These very different perspectives are of course very much attributable to opposing researcher ideologies, but I wish to focus on neglected differences in the research context, and include the work of another major Canadian scholar to show that this is more than just Caulfield and Ley against Smith and the rest. Damaris Rose (1996), who has long been concerned with the gentrification of Montreal and the ways in which that city can be included in and excluded from broad theoretical stances in the

study of gentrification¹⁰ (see also Germain and Rose, 2001), uses well balanced empirical material to contend that gentrification is not all about inner city neighbourhoods being rapidly swamped by yuppies and utterly transformed into bourgeois enclaves. Attacking what she views as “woefully inadequate” stage models of gentrification, she argues that

“it is not inevitable, even in advanced tertiary cities, that all neighbourhoods where a ‘beachhead’ of ‘first wave gentrifiers’ is established will ultimately be caught up in an irreversible dynamic largely driven by major real estate interests and leading to their transformation into homogenous yuppie preserves..... Montreal has not conformed – at least, not as yet – to this vision of an ineluctable advance of gentrification” (Rose, 1996, p.153).

Rose points to the fact that many gentrified and gentrifying districts in Montreal in fact exhibit ‘social diversity’, rather than the more segregated outcome demonstrated in American research:

“The co-residence of urban professionals of varying levels of income and job security, of traditional residents, and of other groups has proven to date to be an enduring phenomenon in the three Montreal neighbourhoods that underwent the most ‘professionalization’ in the 1980s. Even at the scale of a city block, rare are the instances where a new social homogeneity has taken hold” (p.157).

Rose, then, does not see gentrification as a homogenising force, and certainly not as a destructive force, yet she is acutely aware that the Montreal context is responsible for her interpretation:

“[I]n Montreal in the 1980s there was insufficient economic ‘muscle’ behind this facet of inner city ‘professionalization’ – that is, there were not enough wealthy potential gentrifiers and the city’s economy was too weak – to unleash a dynamic of wholesale transformation of the most ‘professionalized’ neighbourhoods” (p.161).

The key question for Rose, mirroring some other gentrification research in Canadian cities (e.g. Dantas, 1988; Filion, 1991; Bourne, 1992), is set out very clearly:

¹⁰ Moreover, Rose has been consistently and highly critical of approaches to gentrification which ignore the gendering of gentrification (Rose, 1984, 1989; see also Bondi, 1991, 1999b), and also critical of singular uses of the term ‘gentrifier’, the simplicity of which ignores concepts of ‘marginality’ which, for her, drove initial gentrification in the 1980s.

“Where, one might ask, does ‘social diversity,’ with its usually positive connotations, end, and where does the more ominous-sounding ‘social polarization’ begin?” (p.160).

The latter does not seem to be on the horizon in Montreal - the reader is left with ‘positive connotations’ about gentrification in that city – it is emancipatory because different social groups are brought together by gentrification and, for the moment, seem to be staying together, so “social diversity becomes an issue to be reckoned with rather than dismissed in gentrification theory” (p.161).

Notions of emancipation, diversity and empowerment are not exclusive to the study of Canadian city gentrification; nor are the theoretical frameworks designed to address it. As Lees (2000) pointed out, some published work on the intersections between gender, sexuality and gentrification can be grouped under the umbrella of the emancipatory discourse, and it is worth singling out some writings to illustrate this. Interestingly, some of the most salient examples are from American city gentrification. In his famous essay on the history of gay settlement and activism in San Francisco, Castells (1983), while sensitive to the critical literature on gentrification, argued that gay communities such as Castro, Haight Ashbury and Western Addition were consolidated and strengthened by gentrification, not disrupted or destroyed by the process. Queer space emerged, largely free from homophobia and intolerance, and the social geography of San Francisco significantly changed as certain neighbourhoods became arenas for gay middle-class consciousness:

“They have paid for their identity, and in doing so have most certainly gentrified their areas. They have also survived and learnt to live their real life. At the same time, they have revived the colours of the painted facades, repaired the shaken foundations of the buildings, lit up the tempo of the street and helped make the city beautiful and alive, all in an age that has been grim for most of urban America” (Castells, 1983, p.161).

Along these lines, the work of Knopp (1990, 1995) highlights the emancipatory aims and outcomes of gay gentrification. His research into gentrification in New Orleans revealed that “gays (mostly white middle-class men) sought economic and political power as well as sexual freedom” (1995, p.152), and gentrification was central to the

ways in which gay identity was consolidated, gay space was asserted and sexuality could be performed 'out of the closet' without fear of opposition. Knopp's work, along with that of Rothenberg (1995) in Park Slope, Brooklyn on lesbian gentrifiers, illustrates convincingly that the relationships between homosexuality and gentrification are realised in a specific, emancipatory geography of the inner-city, where a place is "associated with the creation of an identity, and the collectivity of identities transforms the place" (Rothenberg, 1995, p.179).

The idea of 'emancipatory gentrification' is not, of course, a textbook example of the process and is not likely to sit well with critical scholars. Powerful images of livability, tolerance, social diversity and conviviality often conceal the inequalities that are produced through the process of gentrification (Lees, 2000, p.394), and the liberal, 'reformist' values of gentrifiers are perhaps not as benign as the architects of the discourse imply. A key question is to ask exactly who is being 'liberated' by gentrification, and whether this liberation is at the expense of non-gentrifiers. Gentrification may be liberating for young, bohemian, counter-cultural reformist groups seeking to forge and express their identities in central city locations, but there are serious consequences once this group become an urban 'new middle class'. Among these are the displacement of low-income groups through rising rents and real-estate speculation; an increase in corporate investment as a neighbourhood becomes 'hip' and 'hot', with the conformity of Gap, Starbucks and shopping malls robbing an area of the diversity the counter-cultural groups initially cherished; and the possibility that the central city may become an unaffordable place to live and consume for the people who are vital to its continuity and character. This is not to suggest that Ley, Caulfield, Rose and others are unacquainted with these consequences, but their discussions of gentrification (viewed in Caulfield's case only through the eyes of gentrifiers) often serve to obscure what gentrification means for other, less fortunate inner city groups, and suppresses the possible negative consequences of different social groups coming together in inner-city neighbourhoods. Potential friction between groups is downplayed in favour of the implicit potential of gentrification to encourage such groups to harmonise and fraternise, thus coating the process with a sort of romantic glaze that would doubtless appeal to speculators, developers, realtors and all those agents through whom the city is to be sold to the gentry.

In sum, the emancipatory discourse is the antithesis of the revanchist discourse - yet as a binary opposition, both are *dependent on each other* for their epistemological and ideological weight, and their articulation. As Henriques et al (1984, p.105-6) argue,

“The systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses. In practice, discourses delimit what can be said, while providing the spaces – the concepts, metaphors, models, analogies, for making new statements within any specific discourse...” (Henriques et al, 1984, p.105-6).

While there is, as I stated earlier, an asymmetrical relationship between Canada and America in many spheres of urban life, this is not the case in the production of gentrification discourse, where the relationship becomes a two-way exchange. For example, Smith’s revanchist city arguments are advanced and legitimised in reference to Caulfield’s emancipatory Toronto, which he derides as “Foucault run amok” and “less a contribution to theories of gentrification than to the gentrification of theory” (Smith, 1996, p.43). Betancur’s (2002) account of the politics of gentrification in West Town, Chicago, immediately sides with Neil Smith and, citing Caulfield, dismisses the view that gentrification results from “middle-class activity and creativity”, where the middle-class “emerges as the adventurous pioneer transforming the inner-city” (p.781). By way of contrast, Rose’s (1996) critique of stage models in favour of ‘social diversity’ in a Montreal context is based on a sharp rebuttal of American city research which presents gentrification as an unequivocal polarising force – “[f]or some neo-Marxist scholars, the consideration of social mix is an irrelevant diversion for critical urban research agendas. But findings from Montreal in the 1980s give cause to question such assumptions” (p.155). Ley (1996a) rounds up his exhaustive assessment of Canadian city gentrification with a telling caveat: “the geographical specificity of gentrification should caution us from making arguments that are too binding from evidence that is limited to the United States” (p.352). Clearly, these divergent discourses on gentrification cannot be considered either in isolation or without sensitivity to their contextual origins. The emancipatory perspective, largely from Canadian research, seems to render problematic any attempt by researchers of American cities to claim that the

conditions and forms of revanchist gentrification are applicable outside their area of study, and vice versa.

2.8 Research Aims

Throughout this review, it might seem that there are too many themes vying for attention, and that the introduction of the Canadian versus American, emancipatory versus revanchist binaries sits uneasily with my insistence on moving beyond the overdrawn binaries which still hover around gentrification research as relics of 1980s debates. Therefore, a concise integration of all the themes, and the usefulness of addressing these new binaries, is required before setting out my research aims.

I have argued that the movement towards a geography of gentrification is an exciting and warranted direction for gentrification research, and something which is illuminated by a sensitivity to the research context. It is precisely because context has received little attention, and because comparative studies of gentrification are few and far between, that a geography of gentrification is only in its infancy after 40 years of research. This was demonstrated with reference to the debate over 'continentalism' and the 'myth' of the 'North American City'. Generalisations about 'North American gentrification', all too common in past and present literature and not supported by empirical research, obscure the geography of gentrification. I have argued that attention to the opposing discourses of gentrification which have emerged in large measure (though not exclusively) from research in American cities ('revanchist') and Canadian cities ('emancipatory') can provide the lens through which we can see the importance of context in the geography of gentrification, and through which we can shed critical light upon casual references to a North American pattern. In short, this literature review has highlighted the importance of a geography of gentrification which is sensitive to discourses of the process, with particular respect to the research contexts within Canada and America. This thesis, therefore, has two broad interrelated aims:

- To provide a theoretically informed, wide-ranging empirical assessment of the specificities of gentrification in two different neighbourhoods, in two different cities, in two different countries. A gentrifying neighbourhood

(South Parkdale) in Toronto, Canada, will be contrasted with a gentrifying neighbourhood (Lower Park Slope) in New York City, USA, with the goal of contributing to the collective academic effort of constructing a geography of gentrification. The international comparative focus will also facilitate a contribution to the debate over 'continentalism' and whether we can refer to 'North American gentrification'. However, many more comparative (USA-Canada) studies are required before we can make bold conclusions for or against a 'continentalist' approach to the process, so my intention in this thesis is to provide some *preliminary* insights to this debate.

- To consider how far the contrasting discourses of gentrification which have emerged from each context (emancipatory from Toronto, revanchist from New York City) reflect what is happening to the geographies of one gentrifying neighbourhood in each city. In her recent review of gentrification research, Lees (2000) makes several important calls, but for me one stands out:

"I would also like to see a more updated and rigorous deconstruction of not only the process of gentrification but also *discourses on gentrification*. ...Research into the sociology of academic knowledge production on gentrification will tell us as much, if not more, about the literature on gentrification as a literature review that compares authors' theoretical frameworks, conceptual ideas and empirical research" (p.404).

In an attempt to provide a response to this call, I take this further than 'the sociology of academic knowledge production' - I will contribute to the current literature on the temporal and spatial dimensions of 'post-recession' gentrification by focusing on this neglected perspective of discourse analysis. If gentrification has changed everywhere as much as Hackworth and Smith (2001) and Hackworth (2001, 2002) argue, does the nature of gentrification in two currently gentrifying neighbourhoods still sit well with the discourses which emerged from earlier studies of the process? This is not so much an effort to test discourse empirically, but rather an effort to assess the extent to which gentrification may or may not have changed since these discourses were produced and articulated. The social and political relevance of such a

goal is to throw incisive light upon the enduring question of whether gentrification is a desirable or objectionable aspect of contemporary urban transformation.

The strength and importance of this contribution to the gentrification literature thus lies in its attention to discourse, and in its international comparative focus. With respect to the former, this work has broad appeal at a time when urban studies has taken something of a 'linguistic turn'¹¹ (or 'discursive turn') (Zukin et al, 1998; Hastings, 1999; Mele, 2000a; Lees, 2002). On the latter, only six international comparative studies appear to have been undertaken on gentrification (Cybriwsky, Ley and Western, 1986; Lees, 1994a, 1996; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Smith, 1996; Eade and Mele, 1998) - remarkably few considering the sheer volume of the gentrification literature. One can only speculate why, but I suspect that one reason is the protracted academic divisions over the definition and causes of gentrification, which may have prevented an academic engagement with areas of gentrification research that remain underexplored. In addition to the obsession with theory over empirics, there are considerable methodological demands posed by comparative investigation which might explain the absence of comparative work, and these demands will be the focus of the next chapter before I introduce the case studies at the core of this project.

¹¹ It must be stated that reducing discourse solely to linguistic practices is perhaps too narrow a conception. As Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.35) argue from a Foucaultian perspective, the wealth of discourse analyses in recent years has led to the erroneous idea that discourse is purely a linguistic term, when in fact "discourse is not only about language". More importantly for this thesis, Mele (2000a, p.629-30) shows that "consideration of the significance of discourses about the city does not require an abandonment of the analytical focus on urban form and spatial practices". See Lees (2002, p.104-6) for a summary.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

“Field research is accompanied by a set of experiences that are, for the most part, unavailable through other forms of social scientific research. These experiences are bound together with satisfactions, embarrassments, challenges, pains, triumphs, ambiguities, and agonies, all of which blend together into what has been described as the field research adventure. It is difficult to imagine a field research project that does not include some of these features, however skilled and experienced the researcher. Anyone undertaking field research for the first time....encounters a mix of these feelings but, unlike the seasoned investigator, locates the problem within the self as arising from inadequate preparation and experience. ...[But] what they are feeling is a natural part of the experience rather than an outcome of their bumbling and lack of expertise” (Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowetz, 1980, p.7).

3.1 ‘Life as a field trip’

The quotation which opens this chapter encapsulates the ambivalence which, having completed my field research, I now feel towards the process of gathering data. Fieldwork, on the one hand, was often a hugely challenging and rewarding endeavour, leading to some important insights which will be clarified in subsequent chapters, but on the other hand, it was frequently very frustrating, leading to constant self-evaluation and confusion. It is this ‘other hand’ that will constitute the retrospective focus of much of this chapter, as it is through methodological difficulties that one learns the most about the nuances of fieldwork. Honesty requires me to disclose that I wasn’t expecting the research process to be so awkward, and in fact was looking forward to it. It seemed so simple – go and find a gentrifying neighbourhood, a couple of gatekeepers to informants, get started with the interviews, and hopefully join in with a few community groups to learn a bit more and contribute. I think my naivety was largely due to the fact that so many textbooks on research methods tell you ‘how to do it’ or ‘how not to do it’ without much commentary on how difficult ‘it’ actually is. What I began to realise is that no textbook or journal article, however instructive or concise, can possibly prepare a researcher for the particularities of place, chance and circumstance, and the subtle interactions between scholar and context. We are warned about ethical and practical conduct, about reflexivity and positionality, about object and subject, but seldom about how everything we have learned, or all the advice we have been given, may be irrelevant or inadequate when we enter the field.

Fieldwork is an inexact science, and in the context of this thesis, as chaotic as the subject under investigation (Rose, 1984; Beauregard, 1986). While it is essential to have a broad framework, and a clear idea of how one intends to gather data, such is the extent of this chaos that I now do not think it possible or sensible to have a detailed, step-by-step fieldwork plan to which one must rigorously adhere. I tried this, but it was a hopeless exercise which I abandoned in the first week of fieldwork. I quickly learned that one must be flexible and expect the unexpected, allowing considerable breathing space for bizarre twists and turns. Harvey (1985) crystallises why this is so by referring to

“moments, events, people and experiences that impinge upon imagination in unexpected ways, that jolt and jar received ways of thinking and doing, that demand some extra imaginative leap to give them meaning” (p.xv).

Above all, the old axiom that patience is a virtue is wholly applicable to fieldwork. A qualitative researcher’s schedule is governed to a significant degree by the schedules of others – some weeks may yield half a dozen interviews, another week none at all. As these sorts of research dilemmas became more frequent, they began to blur the boundaries between what constituted research ‘in the field’, and what was part of my ‘everyday’ postgraduate life. I thus found answers, not to mention solace, in the feminist literature on fieldwork, research dilemmas and the epistemology-methodology link, where, to quote one oft-cited phrase, “I am always, everywhere, ‘in the field’....” (Katz, 1994, p.72). While these words were written to describe a feminist conceptualisation of ethnography which erases the distinction between ‘home’ and ‘work’, I consider it an extremely useful catchphrase to bear in mind for *any* researcher undertaking a qualitative investigation. This is because such research is ‘part of life’ (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002, p.251-299) – participant observation, in-depth interviews, action research or any other personal encounter are, I believe, difficult to divorce from our everyday activities. Yi-Fu Tuan (2001) summarises this as ‘life as a field-trip’:

“[H]e or she needs to have a firm grasp of the socio-economic and intellectual conditions that promote the savoring of life. With such a backdrop, the scholar is in a position to examine experience

systematically, starting perhaps with his or her own, and moving on from there to the thick-textured lives of other people in other places and other times” (p.45).

These humanist musings intertwine with feminist elaborations of reflexivity and positionality to remind us that we project our personalities and our values into our research and onto others, and findings and knowledges are thus partial, or ‘situated’, reflections of what the researcher did, saw, heard and felt, rather than what *can* be done, seen, heard and felt. England (1994) defines reflexivity as “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as a researcher” (p.82), but this should come with the warning that claiming to know even our own motives is as troublesome as claiming to know everything about a social situation (G. Rose, 1997). In this regard, qualitative research cannot be distanced from everyday life, where our personalities and values are produced and reproduced, never static or fully developed. While I knew what kinds of methods I wanted to use, I found it much more productive to shape a research agenda as I undertook the research, as part of my (changing) life, rather than draw out a schematic, day-by-day plan which is somehow different from what I ‘usually do’.

While the insights of feminism, and to a lesser extent postcolonialism, were extremely helpful to my project, engagement with some recent feminist approaches to methodology also implanted a sense of frustration which I wanted to address during the course of my fieldwork. The words of Margaret Walton-Roberts, in personal communication with Jennifer Hyndman (2001), exemplify the sorts of thinking which are at the root of my disquiet:

“It is arguably a more masculinist practice to pontificate from on high than to plant oneself in the field and wring one’s hands about the politics of doing so at the same time” (p.263).

While the masculinist biases of earlier geographical inquiries and methods – not to mention the bias of the entire discipline (G. Rose, 1993) - are unquestionable and well documented, I am troubled that a feminist would reinforce two binary distinctions (male-female and theory-fieldwork) when the exposition and resolution of binaries is a central concern of the feminist project. Berg (1994) has warned us of the problems of dichotomous thinking, using the (contrary) example of how some

New Zealand human geographers gender 'theory' as feminine and subordinate it to masculine 'empirical investigation'. He argues that such gendering obscures the "articulation between theory and empirical investigation.... 'empirical investigations' are *always already* theoretical, just as theory is always touched by our empirical experience" (p.256-7). As Crang (2002) has highlighted in his recent review of qualitative research in human geography, the debate "has moved on from over-quick assumptions that qualitative work was intrinsically more feminist or committed, to considering its weaknesses and strengths in a more balanced fashion" (p.648). Of course, a number of scholars still 'pontificate from on high', especially in the gentrification literature, but to imply that this is exclusively a male endeavour in human geography is incorrect and unnecessary. This chapter will illustrate exactly how, using the insights of those who did 'pontificate from on high', I 'planted' myself in the field, and 'wrung my hands' about the politics of doing so at the same time.

The insights of feminism, post-Marxism and postcolonialism remind us that our images, understandings and knowledge of social phenomena are not only produced in specific circumstances, but also by the ways in which we undertake social scientific research. In Chapter 2 I hinted at how these important reminders have largely gone amiss in published work on gentrification. There has been very little attempt by academics researching gentrification to consider how their research methods influence their findings and inform their understanding of the process¹². Lees (1998) points out that the

"contrast between these alternative views of gentrification has usually been explained in terms of theory, but it is also one of methodology.Gentrification researchers need to think more carefully about how their research methods – as well as their theory - influence their findings" (p.2258).

Lees is most troubled by the fact that contemporary concerns with the poetics and politics of knowledge (re)production (e.g. Barnes and Gregory, 1997) are not recognised in the gentrification literature. One can only speculate why this is so – possible reasons include the preoccupation with theory to which she refers, the

¹² For some recent exceptions, see Hammel and Wyly (1996); Butler (1997); Wyly and Hammel (1999, 2001); Atkinson (2000a, 2000b); Butler and Robson (2001).

relative lack of feminist voices in the literature, and the rich empirical tradition of urban geography which until more recently has proved somewhat resistant to the influence of human geography's cultural turn (Johnston, 2000; Lees, 2002). If the intense theoretical debate which dominated the gentrification literature in the 1970s and 1980s had been sensitive to the spectrum of techniques utilised to assess gentrification, it is likely we would have a much fuller understanding than we currently do of the ways in which the nuances of neighbourhood change are to some extent methodologically dependent. The increasing theoretical sophistication brought about by the cultural turn has thrown new light on the importance of reading the interplay between epistemology and methodology..

There is thus something of an epistemological lacuna in the gentrification literature because of a lack of attention to research methods. To avoid falling into the same trap, this chapter will now explore some of the possibilities and pitfalls of international comparative urban research, which leads into detailed accounts of all the research methods I used, along with problems and detours I encountered along the road, and how they were or were not resolved. In what follows, I will reflect a trend captured by Crang (2002): "we are beyond simply championing or justifying qualitative methods" and have moved into "self-reflection and criticism" (p.649). I am fully aware of what Ley and Mountz (2001) describe as "the important line between reflexivity as rigorous contextualization of qualitative data and narcissistic, emotionally motivated navel gazing" (p.245), and of the risks involved in autobiographical accounts of my research experiences. I thus attempt to look up from my navel in a serious attempt to describe how I collected data on gentrification in two different places, whilst retaining a personal, somewhat self-critical tone which I hope will reflect not narcissism but the thoughts of an inexperienced researcher coming to terms with the tremendous challenges posed by geographical excursions into the inner-city.

3.2 International comparative urban research: some possibilities and pitfalls

In February 2001, I attended the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in New York. A panel session entitled 'Magical Urbanism vs. Postmodern Urbanism', organised by Michael Dear, addressed the pros and cons of

comparative urban research by placing Dear's 'The Postmodern Urban Condition' (2000) against Mike Davis's 'Magical Urbanism' (2000). One of the panelists, Gerry Pratt, was somewhat sceptical of comparative investigation. Reflecting on her experiences in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a highly traumatised inner-city neighbourhood, she commented that the social problems there, not to mention in other urban neighbourhoods of other cities, are so great that she often wonders 'what's the point of comparative research when we should be focusing all our attentions on one place?'. I think Pratt is touching on important and underexplored issues. Why should research time and energy be devoted to two or more places when one place's geographies are so fascinating, and more importantly, so urgent? Also, if research issues in one place are so demanding or ambivalent, why complicate matters by undertaking a comparison? Given the geographer's interest in space and place, it is surprising that these are questions to which geographers have provided few answers. So what is the point of international comparative research?

May (1997, p.185-9) identifies four 'views' which lend comparative research great potential:

- 1) The *import-mirror view*, where producing findings on the practices of other countries helps us to see and understand the basis of our own practices;
- 2) The *difference view*, where comparative work attempts to explain and understand difference and leads to insights into why some countries have developed in similar ways and others in other ways;
- 3) The *theory-development view*, which sees increasing theoretical sophistication and discovery arising from comparative research, and
- 4) The *prediction view* where the potential for the success of particular policies, systems or practices in a given society can be determined, based on the examination of the experiences of their effects in other societies and social and cultural contexts.

All four of these views are closely connected in some way, and illustrate the exciting possibilities for international comparative research. They also serve to provide an answer to Pratt's question on the wider purpose and benefit of comparative work. For example, if we were to juxtapose the experiences of Vancouver's Downtown

Eastside (Sommers, 1998) with those of say, the Tenderloin district of San Francisco (Robinson, 1995), the import-mirror view might provide a window through which we might see why the Downtown Eastside is suffering in the way it currently is. In a similar vein, using the difference view to compare the historiographies of the Downtown Eastside and the Tenderloin would lead to considerable insights into the contexts of their current urban conditions, and the theory-development view would assist in any attempt to theorise urban change over time in each place. The prediction view may assist in the construction of policies designed to ameliorate the traumas which both these neighbourhoods have experienced over the years. However, this does not mean that any of the views should be adopted without hesitation. The prediction view, for example, is clearly the one which we should approach with most caution, due to its positivist undertone and the imperialist practice of imposing one policy on a place which had no say in its definition. As history teaches us, this can lead to appalling human consequences.

This research will largely exhibit the difference and theory development views, which are seen as integral to this contribution to the geography of gentrification. At the risk of being somewhat petty, it is important to make a refinement to the difference view by making it a *similarity and difference view* – I am interested in not just the subtle differences in two gentrifying neighbourhoods, but the subtle similarities also, and what theoretical advancements might result as a consequence of these subtleties. Such a project, however, and all the intellectual possibilities which come with it, is not without its theoretical and methodological pitfalls, of which overgeneralization and overdifferentiation are the deepest.

The extraordinary sea change in the intellectual environment brought about by postmodern thought reached a pinnacle in geography in the late 1980s, with major contributions altering the ways in which scholars approached their work (e.g. Dear, 1988; Harvey, 1989, Soja, 1989: for a review, see Cloke, Philo and Sadler, 1991, p.170-201, and Gregory, 1994, p.257-313). The undercurrent of many postmodern analyses was scepticism of ‘grand’ theory, totalising discourses/generalising metanarratives, truth claims, objective social reality – all of which were to be replaced in some measure by a reorientation of academic thought towards human diversity and cultural difference, and the particularities of place and circumstance.

There is no need or place here for a detailed historical-geographical overview of postmodernist thought, but it is important to register that the framework and purpose of comparative urban research at all spatial scales changed within this postmodern context. A look at two comparative works published a decade apart illustrates this transformation:

“Given cross-cultural variability in social reality, the problem for the social scientist is to design research or arrange existing data in such a way as to yield the most meaningful generalizations” (Masotti and Walton, 1976, p.5).

“A comparative approach.....could help avoid the serious theoretical errors that arise from overgeneralization from specific cultural contexts.Urban governments are organized in geographically different ways, different fiscal characteristics are apparent, and powers in land housing markets are exercised differently. Only comparative work reveals this” (Goldberg and Mercer, 1986, p.10-11).

Where in the mid-1970s the aim of comparative urban research was to yield meaningful generalizations, the aim a decade later was to prevent them and elaborate differences. The latter aim became even more important as many urban scholars directed their attentions towards ‘global’ or ‘world’ cities (e.g. Sassen, 1991; Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe, 1992; Knox and Taylor, 1995) and the local urban imprints of globalisation:

“Generalizations about the nature and functions of global cities in the contemporary era tend to underplay variations that arise from the unique national institutions that serve as the context for their development. ...The challenge of comparing global cities has furthermore been compounded by the varying depths of their historical heritages.Not only are their landscapes difficult to ‘read’, but they are not easily compared with one another, because the national and cultural contexts in which they developed are so different”¹³ (Abu-Lughod, 1999, p.3).

This is not to say, however, that all scholars have found a globalising world a complication for comparative investigation. Body-Gendrot (2000), for instance, while “aware of the treacherous nature of the comparative exercise” (p.xxxi),

¹³ Abu-Lughod is most directly critiquing Saskia Sassen (1991). See also Sandercock (1998) for ‘the theory that difference makes’.

believes that globalisation has in fact made life *easier* for the comparative investigator:

“We know so much more than we did fifty years ago about the global developments that shape crime and violence at the local level, and about national and local social controls, differences of rationales, the ethnicization [sic] of social relations, and community actions in both Europe and the USA. The analyses of changes, trends, and processes observed all over the postmodern world of the late 1990s in Western countries have made cross-national differentiations somewhat less formidable for researchers” (p.xxxv).

These words unlock the zeitgeist of current geographical work on the politics of scale, where many attempts have been made to tease out the subtleties of the ‘local-global dialectic.’ Neil Brenner’s insightful (2001) critique of Abu-Lughod (1999) is notable for its contention that the author ignored this dialectical tension in favour of a dualistic conception of the local and the global:

“The viability of this methodological strategy can be called into question, however, once it is recognized....that the global and the local (as well as the national) are mutually constitutive rather than distinct scales of social activity.[D]ualistic conceptions are not particularly helpful tools for grasping the types of qualitative sociospatial and scalar transformations that are currently unfolding within and among contemporary cities, and they systematically obscure the ways in which social processes configured at different scales at once influence and interpenetrate each other” (Brenner, 2001, p.134-5).

Likewise, David Smith (1994) has warned of the danger of polarising dualisms (see also Sayer, 1991), and made an eloquent plea for a productive tension between the associated concepts of the universal and the particular with respect to social justice:

“It is time to reassert the importance of human similarity, and in certain respects their sameness, without going to the other extreme of denying the significance of any difference” (p.293).

This plea applies to both people and places, and Harvey (1996) is a voice in concert with Smith:

“[U]niversality must be constructed in dialectic relation with particularity. Each defines the other in such a way as to make the universality criterion always open to negotiation through the particularities of difference” (p.362).

The important contribution of these and other radical geographers towards comparative research is that in a postmodern world, both similarity and difference carry equal importance and are structurally *interdependent* aspects of globalisation. By recognising difference, one cannot deny similarity, and vice versa, and moreover, the two are mutually constitutive. This is a crucial remit for a comparative geographical project. It is unquestionably a human tendency to define what or who we are by reference to what or who we are not, and the same applies to how we categorise and evaluate place. By recognising this tension between similarity and difference, it becomes harder to fall into the trap of generalising and explaining social relations across societies and social contexts (May, 1997, p.189), and equally problematic to sit at the other end of scale in a steadfast denial of any overarching forces. Further help is offered by Gregory (1994) who, following Edward Said, is mindful of the pitfalls of ‘travelling theory’ and argues that theory needs to be grasped out of the time and place out of which it emerges, yet need not remain strictly in time and place:

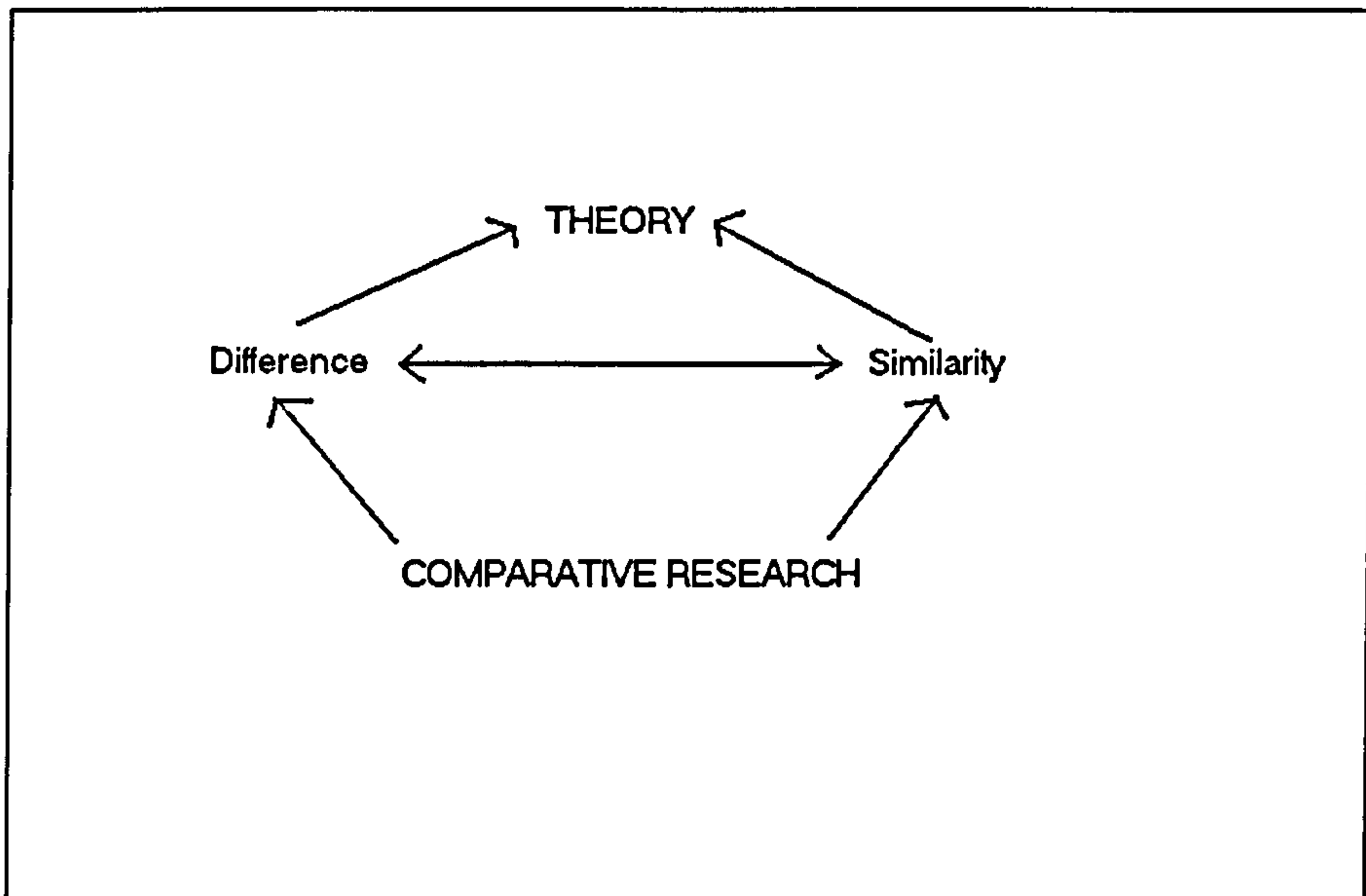
“[S]ocial theory does not come ready-made.....it provides a series of partial, often problematic and always situated knowledges that require constant reworking as they are made to engage with different positions and places” (p.12).

If we return to the similarity and difference and theory-development views described above, Gregory’s words show how closely the two are connected – (social) theory development is situated, but ‘reworked’ during its travels when it is introduced to difference. It is through this reworking that similarities make themselves known:

“If we are to free ourselves from universalising our own parochialisms, we need to learn how to reach beyond particularities, to speak to larger questions without diminishing the significance of the places and people to which they are accountable” (ibid. p.205).

Comparative work, if undertaken with a sensitivity to this dialectical tension between the universal and the particular, or the similar and the different, can steer a middle course between overdifferentiation and overgeneralizations which, in Gregory’s terms, facilitates the “enlarging and examining of our geographical imaginations” (p.205). A simple diagram (Figure 1) illustrates the potential of such a sensitivity.

Figure 1: Comparative research and theory building



Starting at the base of the diagram, comparative research must go in both directions and look at the dialectical relationship between the similarity-difference binary in an attempt to make theoretical advancements.

May (1997) argues that the international comparative researcher must also be sensitive to what he terms ‘appropriateness’ and ‘equivalence’ in order to address the problematic issue of comparing ‘like with like’. The former refers to the appropriateness of the methods employed, as “researchers cannot assume that what is appropriate for their culture will necessarily be appropriate for another” (p.191). This is all-too-apparent for researchers undertaking cross-national comparisons between countries with markedly different ways of life. However, my international comparison was between America and Canada, arguably two fairly similar ‘cultures’, therefore I was satisfied that the same methodologies I used in each country were appropriate to both places of study. Equivalence is more complicated, and refers to the variations in meanings between ‘cultures’. The issue of gentrification has varying degrees of salience and political tension in different cities – for example New York City has a history of intense anti-gentrification activism, but Toronto has little or no such history, and by contrast a very different legacy of

the promotion and celebration of central city living. With this in mind, I knew that I had to tread more carefully in New York City, as I was dealing with a politically-charged issue, or as Smith (1996) called it, ‘a dirty word’. A continual awareness of the context in which different meanings are generated is essential for the qualitative comparative researcher.

This section has highlighted some of the possibilities and pitfalls of international comparative work. It is now time to turn to the specific data collection methods I used to compare each neighbourhood with the other, the problems I encountered along the road, and how they were or were not resolved. As Susan Smith (2001) has pointed out,

“to write ‘I am doing qualitative, rather than quantitative, research’ is no longer sufficient to convey the flavour of a work. We now need to know what kind of qualitative study is involved, and crucially, why it was chosen” (p.23).

3.3 Qualitative techniques

“The problem is that no-one is allowed to say openly and honestly ‘Well, what I really want to do is poke around in this area and see what I can find’” (Gould, 1988, p.13).

“*[W]hat an image is depends on how it is studied*” (S.J. Smith, 1988, p.18).

An advocate of scientific rigour in methodological organisation might well be appalled at the way I conducted my fieldwork. As I mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, it was very much a process without structure, where I knew which methods I wanted to use, but found a step-by-step time-plan to be woefully inadequate for the particulars of each gentrifying neighbourhood, and equally as important, inadequate for who I am and the way I approach something which interests me. I greatly admire those who do adhere to a tight structure and produce excellent qualitative work, but I found such adherence to be a hindrance and quickly learned that if I was going to gather significant data and also produce good work of my own, I must be open minded, flexible and willing to change my strategy if needed. I think much of this was due to the fact that this was my first major fieldwork experience – I had only limited skills in qualitative work from my much

less arduous undergraduate thesis on privatised public spaces¹⁴. This retrospective look at the qualitative techniques I adopted will begin with a discussion of site selection and the initial strategies I used to familiarise myself with unfamiliar neighbourhoods. The section will then proceed with a discussion of my major qualitative technique, unstructured in-depth interviews, before rounding off with an account of action research, a technique I used to supplement the interview data that was collected.

3.3.1 Site selection

While there is much to admire in recent attempts to ‘identify’ gentrified/gentrifying areas with a combination of detailed field surveys and census data (Hammel and Wyly, 1996; Wyly and Hammel, 1999, 2001), my own slant towards qualitative observation and landscape interpretation coupled with chance and circumstance led me to undertake a somewhat different approach to the selection of two sites to study gentrification. I should stress here that I had one strict requirement – I wanted to find an area in both Toronto and New York that was *gentrifying*, rather than gentrified, because of my interest in the changing (rather than changed) social geographies of inner city areas. It is not that there is simply ‘more to find’ in a gentrifying area than a gentrified area, but rather a different set of experiences and perspectives – not to mention different people to talk to – as gentrification proceeds. I have so far spoken of gentrification as a *process* of change – my intention was to learn about this process *as it happened*, rather than find out about what had happened after the process was complete. How did I come to select my two fieldwork sites?

3.3.1.1 South Parkdale, Toronto

The first few weeks of my time in Toronto were spent wandering around almost every neighbourhood in the central city area trying to find a place to live. I realised that this was an opportunity to find a gentrifying neighbourhood, and my inspections of shabby basement apartments and encounters with dubious landlord practices provided a helpful introduction to streets, properties, architecture and the everyday

¹⁴ However, this undergraduate work was also an international comparison, where I did learn the crucial issue of equivalence described in the preceding section.

life of different residential areas, not to mention the hideous arena that is Toronto's rental housing market (the reasons why this is so will be discussed in Chapter 4). At the time I was sleeping on the sofa-bed of a graduate student colleague at the University of Toronto. When scanning the classified section of *The Toronto Star* over breakfast one morning, and finding an advertisement for an affordable apartment in Parkdale, my colleague said "You don't want to live there, man." When I asked why, he said "It's a rough neighbourhood, a pretty miserable area." I was intrigued by his comment, as the advertisement said "1 bed apartment in Victorian gem in trendy Parkdale." This was the first time that I sensed 'something was up', to use Canadian parlance, and that Parkdale might be a suitable candidate for investigation. I then had a conversation with an urban social geographer at the University of Toronto, who recommended Parkdale after one of her undergraduates had written a dissertation on its current gentrification. I went to the University library and scanned the search engine of *The Globe and Mail* newspaper, and happened upon a double page feature on increasing inequality within Canadian cities, which used Parkdale as an example. The article in question (Philip, 2000) was fascinating, not least for the following paragraph:

"And what does the future hold for Parkdale? Some think it may become the next Cabbagetown. That its Victorian architecture and growing stock of renovated houses make it a prime candidate for gentrification..... [A]rtists are moving in, antique dealers have opened up shop, and the neighbourhood is showing signs of change".

Talk of "the next Cabbagetown" was especially interesting, as Cabbagetown (also known as Don Vale) is Toronto's most famous example of gentrification, subject to the most scholarly attention in the past (Dynes, 1974; Rebizant et al, 1976; Kary, 1988; Ley, 1993, 1996a; Caulfield, 1994). This media prediction of a neighbourhood's impending gentrification, was not, however, the final evidence I needed to decide that Parkdale was to be my Toronto case study.

I made frequent visits to the neighbourhood in the following weeks, traversing the streets several times on foot, looking for evidence of what I read in the landscape as axiomatic of gentrification – housing renovations adjacent to abandoned properties; 'trendy' art galleries and coffee shops next to established family businesses or thrift

stores; signs of income differentiation (in material possessions, housing façades, peoples' appearances); signs of tensions such as graffiti or posters showing concerns of rising rents, and so on. All these classic signifiers of neighbourhood change were evident in Parkdale, but not ubiquitous. I found a tangible differentiation between the northern part of the neighbourhood and the area south of Queen Street (see Figure 3), with the former appearing solidly middle-class with hardly any signs of change, the latter a far greater mix of classes and significantly more interesting to the researcher looking for a neighbourhood in transition. It became clearer with each visit that *South Parkdale* was going to be my neighbourhood of choice.

Not long after my early visits to South Parkdale, I had the great fortune to encounter a local architectural historian through another graduate student friend. After telling me on the phone that he “wouldn’t live anywhere else, the place is like a museum of 20th century urban change”, he very kindly gave up three hours of one morning to take me on a tour of almost every street in the neighbourhood, providing a fascinating history of each one we walked along, and sharing his remarkable knowledge of virtually every building lining them. I almost filled an entire notebook during this three hours with wonderfully useful information about the early dwellers of huge mansions, why they were abandoned, how they became rooming houses for ‘psychiatric survivors’, and how they are now being deconverted back into larger dwellings once more. Armed with this comprehensive locally informed introduction to the historiography of South Parkdale, I finalised my decision to study the gentrification of the neighbourhood, and began six months of fieldwork in January 2001.

3.3.1.2 Lower Park Slope, New York City

Even though I conducted fieldwork in New York City after my work in Toronto (from July to December 2001), I had decided on the neighbourhood of Lower Park Slope much earlier, before I began my postgraduate studies. My sister and her husband moved to the neighbourhood in 1997, and from their experiences as jazz musicians trying to find affordable rental accommodation, I began to hear about a neighbourhood in transition. I had read earlier published work on Park Slope (Lees, 1994a, 1996; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Rothenburg, 1995) and was interested to

learn that the gentrification which stabilised in that neighbourhood in the 1970s was beginning to affect the surrounding areas, and moreover, that the boundaries of the neighbourhood were expanding, and it was being chopped by real estate agents into 'Prime Slope', 'Center Slope', 'South Slope', 'Lower Slope' and so forth¹⁵. In late 1999 I undertook a pilot visit to the area, was introduced to people who knew the neighbourhood well, and found significant media attention to not only the area's 'revitalization', but also the strategies of a local non-profit community group who were fighting displacement caused by gentrification. The full story of the neighbourhood will be told in Chapter 5, but my pilot visit to the area confirmed the impression I had formed from conversations with my sister and brother-in-law.

The symbols of gentrification there were even clearer than they were in South Parkdale – an abundance of reactionary graffiti against 'yuppies'; major transformations to the main commercial strip in the area, Fifth Avenue; an obvious mix of residents and lifestyles, made even clearer by a strong Hispanic presence next to the incoming, predominantly white middle-class; all against the backdrop of the extraordinary resurgence of Brooklyn in the context of a late 1990s economic boom in New York City. Gentrification was so tangible in Lower Park Slope that one simply didn't need to be presented with census data or survey results to be convinced that reinvestment on a substantial scale was taking place. As I knew much more about this neighbourhood than I did about South Parkdale, it was a useful frame of reference and a starting point for my comparative study to think about what I had seen and heard in early visits to Lower Park Slope when in the process of gathering data in South Parkdale.

3.3.2 In-depth interviews

"Despite all the advice in the world about how to do interviews.....it is a combination of luck, circumstances, and the particular individual interaction on the day that affects how the interview goes" (McDowell, 2001, p.209).

The inexact science of the interview constituted the bulk of my research, became the method which yielded the most interesting data, and was the process from which I

¹⁵ This important aspect of the neighbourhood's gentrification will be discussed in Chapter 5.

learned the most about qualitative investigation in the field. I knew from the outset that I wanted to talk to a wide variety of individuals in each neighbourhood – not just gentrifiers, not just non-gentrifiers, not just real estate agents, not just policymakers. Most qualitative work on gentrification has presented the views of one of these groups which, while often insightful, does provide a somewhat biased perspective which leaves many questions unanswered. With this in mind, I sought the views of a spectrum of informants – middle-class *and* working-class, community organisers and activists, planners, realtors, politicians, landlords, small-business owners, and so on. The sample in each study site was small and not pre-determined – 41 interviews in South Parkdale, 29 in Lower Park Slope – but the intensive encounter of the in-depth interview, where meaning is more important than the provision of quantifiable information, serves to refute any objections to the representativeness of the data extracted. Greele (1991) illustrates that “interviewees are not representative of the population at large or any particular segment of it”, and argues that when objections are raised about representativeness

“they raise a false issue and thereby obscure a much deeper problem. Interviewees are not selected because they represent some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify historical processes” (p.131).

In my case, they typified deep, varying knowledge of life in a gentrifying neighbourhood. The aim of the intensive interview, as Susan Smith (2000) has put so well,

“is not to collate typical responses to pre-defined questions from a random sample, or to generalize about the views of a population, but rather to record in complex detail the opinions and ideas of a relatively small number of individuals or groups who may have been selected systematically for the light they can cast on a particular area of sociological concern” (p.660).

I thus approached a potential interviewee by saying that I wanted to learn more about this place from someone who knew it better than I. As Hoggart, Lees and Davies (2002) argue, “intensive methods are not appropriate for tabulating the incidence of events but are appropriate for exploring rationalities, implications and meanings” (p.204).

My early plan in South Parkdale, which I hoped to repeat in Lower Park Slope, was to organise a series of focus group discussions on gentrification, to bring people with different views together and encourage a debate which I could moderate and record. Shortly after I began my research, I made contact with the principal of a large high school in South Parkdale. He entertained the idea and seemed keen to help, and invited me to a parents' evening where I could speak about my intentions and hopefully recruit a few participants. When I turned up that evening, I was alarmed to find only four parents present, three of whom had only a rudimentary grasp of the English language. I left the principal with a pile of flyers (advertising for participants) for pupils to give to their parents, but perhaps not surprisingly did not receive one phone call. Still upbeat about this method, my next strategy was to advertise around the neighbourhood. I stuck flyers to lampposts, left them in cafes, shops, community centers and the excellent local library, but a week passed again without one phone call. It was around this time when I made contact with a legal worker of a non-profit community legal services organisation. When I explained my disappointment and difficulty in finding participants, she replied "No-one will want to do that here. You could try, but people will end up hitting each other. I for one would never participate in a round-table discussion on gentrification – it's too tense an issue here". The reasons why this is the case will be explored in detail in the next chapter, but suffice to say here that she was absolutely right and focus groups would have been a disaster. When in subsequent weeks I attended open public meetings about housing issues, some of which almost descended into anarchy, it became clear that focus group interviews, however epistemologically valuable, were not the method I should use in this neighbourhood. Because of issues of appropriateness (see above), I did not organise focus groups in Lower Park Slope either, and instead used the same technique I turned to in South Parkdale – unstructured in-depth interviews.

3.3.2.1 Access and gatekeepers

In South Parkdale, once I had settled on the technique of in-depth interviewing, I was fortunate to encounter several gatekeepers to a range of different respondents. My next-door neighbour in Toronto knew a couple who had moved into the neighbourhood a decade ago, renovating a dilapidated Victorian house on a street in

South Parkdale currently undergoing intense gentrification. After this couple gave me some contact numbers, I used the technique of 'snowballing', repeatedly "using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else" (Valentine, 1997, p.116; see also Caulfield, 1994, p.154-6), and managed to interview a number of gentrifiers, all due to the chance of talking to my neighbour about my research. Access to non-gentrifiers, such as recent immigrants, psychiatric survivors and low-income tenants, was facilitated by two individuals – one was an outreach worker at a community 'drop-in' center for the mentally ill and homeless, the other being the legal worker I mentioned earlier, who put me in contact with her colleagues, some of whom gave me the numbers of low-income tenant activists and other neighbourhood residents who were concerned about gentrification. Access to landlords, developers, planners and politicians was not so easy, and had to be arranged without the help of a gatekeeper. I approached landlords who turned up at community meetings, walked into the sales offices of developers currently involved in the conversion of warehouses into loft apartments, e-mailed three different planners working for the City of Toronto explaining my research aims, and wrote a letter to the elected councillor for the administrative ward which contains South Parkdale. Most agreed to meet and share their views with me. Other respondents were often obtained by chance, through friends/colleagues who said "oh, I know someone who lives/lived there, you should talk to them", or in the case of one memorable afternoon when I had finished an interview with the director of the community drop-in center, through my own efforts, where I struck up conversations with people who were using the center, asking them to tell me why they started coming here, why they couldn't afford to pay their rents, or in one particularly harrowing case, why they had to resort to prostitution to make ends meet.

In Lower Park Slope, I had significant problems in the recruitment of respondents. Just as I was making progress and had made contact with a few potential gatekeepers, the horrific events of September 11th meant that asking people to talk to me about gentrification was a hopeless exercise and I lost nearly a month of valuable research time as peoples' attentions, not to mention my own (having witnessed terrorism from my rooftop) were understandably directed towards something so much more important, distressing and life-changing. It would have been foolish and

insensitive to attempt to gather informants during the most tragic few weeks in New York City's history. Eventually, as people began to return to their daily lives, I started afresh and hoped that a local community organisation (to be described later in this chapter) who are engaged in a fight against displacement caused by gentrification would lead to a range of informants - especially low-income tenants. Sadly, their response to my research aims was disappointing. After a promising first meeting with one of the organisation's directors, where we agreed to "help each other out" (i.e. in exchange for a list of interviewees, they would receive the results of my work), it became clear that they were not going to provide me with many contacts at all and I would have to find other ways to recruit people. I think much of this was due to my temporary, newcomer and foreigner status in the neighbourhood, and also because this particular organisation, in the words of a colleague at the nearby Pratt Institute, "have students knocking on their door all the time, and I guess they must need some convincing that you are genuine".

In the end, when it became clear that I was 'genuine', I did manage to talk to a few people from their 'books', but not nearly as many as I would have liked. A more successful strategy was to stick flyers on lampposts in the neighbourhood asking for locally informed views on gentrification, and on six blocks evenly distributed throughout the neighbourhood I put 300 flyers through front doors, and received a few respondents that way. Access to 'elites' (i.e. planners, politicians, housing lawyers) proved impossible – nobody returned my countless phone calls, e-mails or letters explaining my intentions. One can only speculate why – perhaps gentrification is too heated an issue, or perhaps because it was a city in crisis after September 11th, or perhaps because of suspicion of a foreign researcher nosing around in a place which, in their eyes, should not concern me.

3.3.2.2 Rapport: chatting, and leaving the tape recorder at home

One of the most crucial lessons I learned during the recruitment of respondents in both neighbourhoods was to avoid referring to a prospective meeting as an 'interview'. Early on, the reactions to this word were of suspicion, such as "What do you mean, interview?", or "Oh God, you're not a journalist are you?", or "No thanks, I don't like doing things like that". It made a huge difference simply to say "Would

you like to meet for chat?”, or “Can we meet sometime soon so you can tell me a bit more about it?”. One renowned scholar of social research methods has argued that intensive unstructured interviews should be seen as *conversations* (Burgess, 1984, p.101), because a more formal approach “puts the interviewer in an unnatural relationship with those who are researched”. Burgess advocated a move away from this relationship towards “the experiences of the researcher who engages in a series of friendly exchanges in order to find out about peoples’ lives” (p.103). I found such an approach to be extremely helpful, not least because I am not keen on academic formality and dislike the obvious power imbalances between researcher and researched. While I made it very clear to each respondent that I was well versed in matters of gentrification, I made it equally clear that, as a foreign researcher from Britain and a newcomer to each location, I knew very little about life in the neighbourhood in question, and wanted to learn as much as possible from the person with whom I was speaking. I would often be successful in recruiting informants and gain interesting insights by saying “this is how I do things, how I learn about places, by talking to people such as yourself!”. It is absolutely vital, I believe, to make the person you are talking to aware that what they are saying is helpful and above all, important.

William F. Whyte (1982) has sensibly pointed out that the novice interviewer “gets questions answered faster than he [sic] can think up new ones, and he finds this a most disturbing experience” (p.113). With this warning in mind, to allow for flowing conversation I dispensed with any kind of rigorous topic guide or checklist of points to cover, making sure in advance of a meeting that I knew in my head exactly the kind of open-ended questions – the ‘tell me about(s)....’ (Valentine, 1997) which I wanted to put forward to my respondent. The early stages of an interview are the most crucial, as both researcher and researched need to be calmed by comfortable questions which facilitate detailed responses and thoughtful engagement. When a conversation began to flow and a constructive dialogue emerged (not always!), I often thought that ‘interviewee’ seemed a rather inappropriate word for the person seated opposite. They were people whose company and conversation I was enjoying, not simply sources of data or poignant quotations. In sum, my approach was informal, relaxed and took the form of completely unstructured chats with locally informed individuals. On occasion I had to abandon informality and dress well, such

as the time when I arranged a meeting with the Councillor for the administrative ward that contains South Parkdale. The venue was his office in City Hall and it simply would not have been appropriate to turn up unshaven, wearing jeans! However, even in more formal settings, I tried to retain a friendly, unstructured *approach*, giving freedom to my respondent to elaborate on issues and perspectives in their own detailed terms. Many researchers might be uncomfortable with this approach, because it might give a respondent considerable license to ramble on in unnecessary detail when there are other issues at hand. However if we follow Bryman (1988), this can be insightful:

“[R]ambling can be viewed as providing information because it reveals something about the interviewee’s concerns. Unstructured interviewing in qualitative research, then, departs from survey interviewing not only in terms of format, but also in terms of its concern for the perspective of those being interviewed” (p.47).

Bryman argues that the interview is an occasion where *both* researcher and researched ‘create knowledge’, a process which is facilitated by “the art of asking and listening” (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002, p.235-7). Seale (1998) conveys something of this art-form when he describes the unstructured interviewer’s task as “non-directive”, and

“one of monitoring what is emerging, perhaps gently guiding the speaker on to certain topics that seem promising, or asking for clarification when points made by the speaker seem unclear. This can involve drawing a person into telling a story in their own words by using interventions such as ‘tell me more’, or semi-verbal cues like ‘uh-huh’ which encourage an interviewee to continue speaking. The emphasis is on allowing the speaker to say how they see things, in their own words, rather than making them follow the researcher’s agenda” (p.206-7).

Such an informal approach was greatly assisted by the realisation that the presence of my tape recorder was not at all helpful. There are clear advantages that come with the use of a machine, such as aiding memory, accuracy and detail, the capture of differing tones and textures (irony, sarcasm, passion, hesitation), and the considerable boon, when analysing the data, of being able to return to a conversation months after it took place. But I believe that there are also many advantages that come with leaving the tape recorder at home and relying on jottings and memory.

Here I am immediately drawn to the research methods and experiences of John Western (1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b), perhaps the most candid of those social researchers who jettison the intrusive whirr of tape spool. Reflecting on his interviews with twelve Barbadian families in London, the following passage is a delightful justification for the way I chose to record my data, and applies to what follows in the coming chapters of this thesis:

“There are evident disadvantages in eschewing taping. One loses sometimes the gravid pause, the subtle inflection. One cannot guarantee verisimilitude. In some of this book’s quotations an ‘um’ or an ‘er’ has been inserted, I admit that. On the other hand, there are absolutely no composites, no artful moulding of two separate interviews into one. In a few of the quotations, mainly very long ones, I’ve changed sentence order. Wilful doctoring, however, has affected only about one in ten of the quotations; I ask the reader to trust me on that. Most of whatever inaccuracies there may be in these quotations will be accidental, not willed. The inaccuracies will be the result of my faulty memory. And that leads straight to what must be the simplest, most important drawback in choosing not to tape: one cannot, if one relies on memory, come back again to the moment itself, for reappraisal and reinterpretation, as one can with tapes. However, this is not the time to add to the already considerable methodological literature about how or how not to use which particular vehicle of inquiry. Not to beat about the bush, I simply don’t *like* tape recording my interviews. I know how uncomfortable I would feel if I was being interviewed and saw that everything was going into the record” (Western, 1992, p.xvii).

In my very first interviews in South Parkdale, I used a tape recorder with the consent of my respondents, but two alarming things would happen during the meeting. First, when the respondent would touch on a controversial topic, or discuss someone in the neighbourhood who I might know or subsequently meet, they would glance nervously at the machine and say “Oh, and this is off the record, by the way...”, or “Actually, can you erase that part when you write this up?”. Secondly, I would find that I was thinking more about the tape recorder working, documenting, intruding, than I was about the conversation which I had initiated. One particularly embarrassing time, I was so caught up in taping thoughts that I asked the same question twice, which was greeted by an understandably irritated respondent: “I’m not going to answer that again, just rewind your tape recorder if you haven’t been listening to me”. Coles (1992) rightly asserts that the tape recorder is

“a formidably shaping presence: a major player, as it were, in what happens between the observer and observed, hence, ironically, an intrusion or distortion that is potentially more significant or substantial than any lapse of memory may turn out to be, or any spell of subjectivity as it determines what is written about what was heard” (p.xiv).

By way of contrast, Valentine (1997) among others, argues that recording equipment “allows the researcher to concentrate on the interview without the pressure of struggling to get the interviewee’s words down on paper” (p.122). For many researchers, yes - but not this one. Early on I found that I could *not* concentrate on the interview with a tape recorder positioned between myself and my respondent, and rapport was thus very hard to establish because I found the presence of the machine to be unnatural - a physical and psychological barrier to ‘being myself’. Relying on (very) brief notes and memory ensured that I could return again and again to most respondents if needed – rapport was so much easier to establish when I made near-constant eye contact with the respondent and showed that I was genuinely interested, rather than burying my head in extensive scribbles or looking worriedly at a tape recorder. When I went to talk to the Toronto politician about gentrification, he said afterwards “Well that was a nice change, not to have one of those annoying tape recorders in my face – thank you for listening to me!”. Reflecting on her interviews with migrants to the UK from the Caribbean island of Nevis, Byron (1993) commented that reactions to a tape recorder can be classified into two categories: “people who were very reticent and frequently looked anxiously at the recorder, and those who performed for it, becoming extremely loquacious and clearly embroidering both their language and content of their accounts” (p.382). However, I realised that even if I was to encounter a natural performer at ease with the machine, *I* would still feel uncomfortable. As Western states,

“to do good work not only respondent but also questioner must be at ease. The interviewer and interviewee are bound to each other; their mien influences each other, back and forth...” (1992, p.xvii).

When an interview was complete, I would go home and take the phone off the hook, and using my brief jottings as an aid to my memory, I would write up everything I could recall from the discussion. Like Western, I am bound to have forgotten things, and on occasion I am doubtless guilty of factual inaccuracy. Another issue of

concern is the ways in which people are quoted, and the possibility of serious misrepresentation through faulty memory. However, I found that a well-tuned memory is an “extraordinarily powerful research tool” and what matters most is that “when asked if what one has quoted is an accurate and truthful representation of what was said, the answer is an accurate and truthful ‘yes’!” (John Western, personal communication, March 2001). When I looked through my typed notes on each interview, sometimes weeks after they were typed, I nearly always remembered things from the conversation which I hadn’t documented right after it took place. To be sure, taping *is* more accurate, but there is a different kind of accuracy which can be gained without it, and that is someone’s honest, frank opinion, which I think, given my uneasiness and inexperience, they were more likely to give to me without a tape recorder distracting me from doing the job.

In an article that has become something of an obligatory passage point into methodological meanderings in qualitative human geography, Baxter and Eyles (1997) admirably suggest that the qualitative researcher should establish a set of criteria for assessing and analysing interview data. Their ‘checklist’ of points to cover (p.518) is extremely useful for a more structured approach to the intensive interview, but I found it unhelpful for my unstructured, tape recorder-less approach. I also have some difficulties with their conclusion that

“there should be no mandatory rules but there should be criteria that enable a judgement to be made concerning honesty, integrity and plausibility of design and accounts” (p.521).

This seems contradictory, because on the one hand they strictly advocate ‘rigour’ and ‘criteria’ throughout their essay, but then say there should be ‘no mandatory rules’. I have always understood that criteria *are* rules, and moreover they seem to imply that their checklist is mandatory! Furthermore, imposing such formalities and orders on methodological practices which in my case were informal and veering towards disorderly is extremely problematic. As Bailey, White and Pain (1999) point out in a thoughtful critique of this article, “it is not possible in qualitative research to adopt a standardized evaluation method.... [T]he criteria for the evaluation of individual projects must arise from the research process itself” (p.170). In this thesis, I take things further than the “reflexive management” (p.172) advocated in Bailey et

al's critique. With respect to Baxter and Eyles's "honesty, integrity and plausibility", I side with John Western and will leave the final judgement *up to the reader*, and ask him or her to trust me when I say that these qualities were constant throughout my work.

3.3.2.3 Difficulties: reflections on a learning process

Interviews took place in a range of different venues – cafes, bars, respondents' homes or workplaces, or even during a walk or sitting in a park. While I sympathise with Elwood and Martin's (2000) welcome addition to the methods literature that the place in which an interview takes place can tell us much about the power and positionality of interviewees, and the 'research process' in general, I found such concerns to be tangential to the task at hand, as I think did my respondents. In short, once a conversation was in full flow, where we were did not really matter – it was where my interviewee was taking me that seemed more important. The range of different people who either came forward or agreed to talk about gentrification meant that every interview was, of course, an entirely unique experience, and as McDowell's words which began this section convey, it is a medley of luck, circumstances and individual interaction on the day which dictate the success of an interview. Looking back, I would say that out of the total of 70 interviews which I undertook, about 10 could be described as disappointing. A number of particulars can be singled out to reveal why some were unsuccessful. In one particularly frustrating case in Lower Park Slope, I was met by a graduate student from the City University of New York who had just taken a course run by Neil Smith, which she did not mention on the phone when we set up a meeting (she only revealed that she had lived in the neighbourhood for many years, and found my flyer 'interesting'). As our chat progressed, it turned out that she thought herself something of an expert on my research topic, and furthermore, she thought it would be a good idea to reveal less about her experiences in the neighbourhood and more about how she thought that I was going about my research in the "wrong way" – without offering a sensible suggestion as to what the "right way" might be. I bid farewell to her after about ten minutes, as clearly she was not going to provide me with an account of her life in Lower Park Slope. In South Parkdale, a meeting I set up with an activist from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), turned out to be a waste of time because

the activist seemed to think that my status as a middle-class academic did not give me the “right to do any research on gentrification”. I tried to convince her otherwise, saying that the purpose was educational, and that I would be sharing my knowledge with community groups in due course, but this was met by the retort “You’re just a yuppie like all those who are kicking poor people out of Parkdale.” It came as no surprise that this individual was arrested a week later for barging in on a meeting at City Hall and screaming expletives at elected officials who were debating Toronto’s affordable housing shortage; whether we agree with her reasons or not, her approach does not allow much room for constructive response.

Another significant problem I encountered in Lower Park Slope was that a few of the people who kindly gave up their time to talk to me had very strong views on academic research into gentrification which did not open a space for dialogue. One afternoon, a man arrived to our arranged meeting, sat down, and said “Talking about gentrification is a waste of time, do you realise that?”. When I asked why he had come to meet me, he said “I’m sick of academics thinking that what they write about gentrification is gonna change anything. Get this into your thick heads: it’s never gonna end”. I sat there bemused and miraculously managed to steer the conversation towards his experiences of living in Lower Park Slope, but I was unsettled by his dismissive attitude and indeed I still am. Others would arrive and say “I’ll tell you all about gentrification, you don’t need to do any research”, or when I explained my research aims would reply “I don’t think you’ll find anything new”. These comments were difficult obstacles for an inexperienced researcher to negotiate. Another time I received an abusive phone call from someone who had seen one of my flyers, and thought it would be a good idea to say to me “Are you for real? Go back to Britain and find something else to research”. Much of this, I think, can be put down to the uneasy relationship New Yorkers have with gentrification; it is such a heated political issue, and I have no doubt that it remains the ‘dirty word’ which Smith (1996) discussed. By way of contrast, in South Parkdale, I would find that gentrification had not even entered the vocabulary of people living there – sometimes, when I would ask on the phone “Would you like to meet and chat about gentrification?”, I would receive replies such as “What’s that?” or “Gentri-..what?”. While many are familiar with the effects of gentrification in Toronto, it is not a word you see printed much, or mentioned anything like as much as in large American

cities. In sum, the research context does not just have profound effects on epistemology, but also on the method of the in-depth interview, at once a fascinating, frustrating and always fickle way of collecting data.

A brief final word on interviews – I have used pseudonyms for all those individuals who kindly agreed to give up their time. Many were not opposed to being associated with this work, but some expressed a wish for anonymity, so it was easier to disguise the identity of all my respondents. I like to think that while their names have been disguised, their attitudes, insights and opinions transcend their anonymity. However, the names of organisations and institutions are not disguised, because like they do, I think it is important to communicate their message, particularly with respect to community groups resisting gentrification.

3.3.3 Action Research

While in-depth interviews constituted the bulk of my fieldwork, they would often (particularly when unsuccessful) lead to much rumination over whether they would stand by themselves and lead to an adequate narrative on the changing nature of two different neighbourhoods. When writing up the interviews at home, I would often be shrouded in concerns over whether this method was somehow deficient by itself, that it would not tell the complete story of what I heard, learned and observed in both research sites. After every day of fieldwork, inspired by the strategies adopted in the remarkable work of David Ley in Philadelphia (Ley, 1974; see also the reflections in Ley, 1988), I would also write up field notes, which took the form of “records of impressions, events and conversations, sometimes reconstructed from brief phrases or sentences scribbled down during the course of the day” (Ley, 1988, p.130). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995, p.26-9) usefully advise researchers to take note of their initial impressions, focus on key events or incidents (especially those counter to expectations), and move beyond personal reactions to document what those in the setting experience and react to as particularly significant. While I found writing field notes to be an extremely effective way of sorting and condensing a whirlwind of thoughts and reactions, the fact that I am not a participant observer (and my study not strictly an ethnography) led me to conclude that field notes were not an entirely adequate nor extensive means of supplementing my main interview data. I needed

another strategy which was more 'hands-on', something which might nudge me over the perceived academic-community (or 'real world') fence and contribute more to my study, so that I could in turn communicate a rich understanding of neighbourhood change to those who will continue to experience it long after my fieldwork was completed.

In the first year of my Ph.D, I wrote and designed a website on gentrification (<http://members.lycos.co.uk/gentrification>) with two broad aims; first, to help organise my own thoughts on (and reactions to) the gentrification literature, and second, to provide the first comprehensive on-line resource for anyone wanting to learn more about gentrification. I found it surprising and frustrating, given the explosive growth in the numbers of people accessing the world wide web, that no such resource existed. It was launched in April 2000, and has become quite a success. I receive countless e-mails from a wide range of people, among the most pertinent of which are the comments of community activists and low-income tenants from many different cities in Europe and North America who try to resist gentrification-induced displacement from getting out of hand. Not only does this hint at the extent of gentrification and its seriousness, it demonstrates that academics researching the process need not just exchange their knowledge with each other. It has been enormously encouraging and rewarding to find that my clarifications of gentrification have been of some use to those who are trying to challenge policies which facilitate the process. From Montreal to Manila, Istanbul to Rio de Janeiro, I learned that there are anti-gentrification activists who *rely* on academic research to expose gentrification as an instigator of inequality and injustice. With the success of this site, it became clear that 'action research' in the form of a productive dialogue with a community facing gentrification, with a view to making a contribution to social change, had much appeal.

The variety of methods that can be listed under the banner of 'action research', both qualitative and quantitative, ensure that action research is not strictly a method per se, but rather a framework for undertaking a project which dissolves the lacuna between theory and practice. It can be defined as an attempt not just to describe a social situation but to contribute to the positive transformation of that situation. The epistemological foundations of action research are a rejection of the subject-object

(or researcher-researched) dichotomy of positivist social science in favour of a collaboration between researcher and researched in order to bring about social change. An action research framework is usually triggered by the researcher learning about a social injustice or exclusionary situation, and engaging with the researched in order to exchange knowledge and skills and join forces in a challenge to the policies or practices which have led to this injustice. Also dubbed 'participatory research' (Stoecker, 1997) or a more complete 'participatory action research' (Whyte, 1991; see also Pratt, 2000), Greenwood and Levin (1998, p.7) maintain that the framework must incorporate a triad of elements: *research*, or 'ways to generate new knowledge'; *participation*, or 'democratizing the knowledge process'; and *action*, or an aim to 'alter the initial situation of the group, organization, or community'. They continue to argue that action research will be a successful strategy if these elements are recognised with a view towards enabling the researched "to mobilize their diverse and complex internal resources as fully as possible", leading to a "liberating situation....in which social change is possible and can be influenced by the participants" (p.12).

Perhaps surprisingly given the recent 'critical geography' movement, human geographers have been somewhat reluctant action research participants relative to social scientists in other disciplines. An explanation has been provided by Kitchin and Hubbard (1999) who argue that it is the distinction between the 'ivory tower' of academia and the messy world of the 'streets' which complicates the geographer's active collaboration with groups, communities and organisations which are either being studied or possess an intimate, experiential knowledge of what is being studied:

"[W]hile critical geographers acknowledge that academic knowledge(s) are produced, situated and politicized, we would argue that they frequently seek to maintain the division between 'gaze' and action in an attempt to reassert their 'academic' credentials.[I]n an era of increasing educational regulation and competition, making connections between action and research is discouraged by a wider culture of academic production. Such a position suggests that overt political commitment should be left at the college gates, and that the 'outputs' of academic labour should be papers in refereed journals with an international audience – not seditious rants or polemics in fanzines.... – and certainly not 'actions'" (p.196).

As a result, specific guides for geographers wishing to conduct action research are almost non-existent, leaving anyone interested in such an undertaking to take note of the problems encountered in brief methodological reflections in published geographical papers which did utilise action research, such as those which appeared in the special issue of *Area* edited by Kitchin and Hubbard (1999).

My own use of action research took the form of an attempt to engage with community organisations in both South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope who champion the rights and needs of low-income tenants in the face of rising rents brought about by gentrification. My somewhat naïve hope was that such organisations would welcome without hesitation the skills and knowledge of a well-intentioned academic researching gentrification, and see it as an opportunity to gain more ‘armour’ in the struggle against the policies and practices which facilitate gentrification at the neighbourhood level. Sadly, I encountered numerous maddening barriers to participation in both cities, and for much of the time action research felt more like *inaction* research. In South Parkdale, no group exists solely to challenge displacement caused by gentrification (a point which will be taken up in greater depth later in this thesis), and I was thus severely restricted in my attempts to participate right from the very beginning. One group, a non-profit legal-aid clinic who help low-income tenants (with nowhere else to go) to challenge rent increases imposed by landlords, were very interested in my research and gave up much of their time to talk to me and supply me with some fascinating anecdotes and data from reports in progress. I asked if I could volunteer to assist in their ongoing efforts to promote social justice in South Parkdale, but they wanted people who were well versed in legal theory and practice and in fact had several volunteer students from a law school already working on many landlord-tenant cases. I became more blunt in my approach, saying “Well how can I become involved, then?” and was met by the reply “Want to get involved? People don’t understand this neighbourhood, Tom. If you could write a really good story of what’s going on here, and give us a copy when it’s done, that would really help us out”. This became my action research in South Parkdale, and the start of many helpful dialogues during the course of my research, especially with one remarkable, courageous woman who knows the neighbourhood intimately and has spent her entire career working tirelessly to illuminate the

injustices imposed on low-income tenants by all three levels of Canadian government.

Before I arrived in Lower Park Slope, I forecast that action research would be more 'hands on' than in South Parkdale because I had followed the admirable work of the Lower Park Slope's Fifth Avenue Committee for a couple of years and was almost certain that they would welcome an academic with open arms. This organisation is explicitly concerned with displacement caused by gentrification – indeed, their mission statement shows a challenge to gentrification to be one of their principal motivations:

“To advance social and economic justice in South Brooklyn, principally by developing and managing affordable housing, creating employment opportunities, organizing residents and workers, and combating displacement caused by gentrification” (Fifth Avenue Committee, 2001).

After introducing myself and explaining my research aims, I felt satisfied that I had begun a productive time of collaboration and information exchange, but for a variety of reasons it did not transpire this way. As mentioned earlier, the events of September 11th cost me a month of research time, and this tragic jolt to the entire city probably affected productivity throughout the rest of my time in the neighbourhood. Also, I am convinced that my status as a foreigner - who clearly had no plans to remain in the neighbourhood when the research was over - was critical in the Committee's somewhat tepid response to my presence. A six-month stay in the neighbourhood (one month lost due to terrorism) was hardly enough time to make a name for myself and establish the trust and respect of the community. Notwithstanding these hindrances to action, there were some moments when it felt like action research, such as when I was involved in the organisation and advertising of a major community meeting run by the Committee, where I gave a brief talk on my work to attendees and finally felt as if I was gaining a little recognition (see Figure 2). Also, just as in South Parkdale, I was asked to submit my work when it

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Displacement-Free Zone In Park Slope

FAC Champions the Rights of Low-Income Families Against Gentrification



Martha Marquez, the tenant organizer for the Fifth Avenue Committee.

Photo By Paul Martinko

By Stephen Witt

Activist low-income residents have redrawn the gentrification battle lines and are preparing for action.

Called the Displacement-Free Zone (DFZ), the lines stretch from 3rd Avenue to 6th Avenue and from 20th Street to Flatbush Avenue.

"We will support low-income tenants in the zone who are facing eviction by a landlord whose motivation is to dramatically increase the rent," said Martha Marquez, a tenant organizer with the Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC).

Founded in 1977, the FAC is a not-for-profit community-based organization in lower Park Slope and South Brooklyn, located on Fifth Avenue between St. John's and Lincoln Place.

The organization's mission is to advance social and economic justice in South Brooklyn, principally by developing and managing affordable housing, creating job opportunities, organizing residents and workers, and combating displacement caused by gentrification.

Marquez said the DFZ started in November 1999, when a lot of community members came to the FAC

office with the same problems of landlords doubling and tripling the rent.

Originally, the DFZ ran from Bergen Street to 2nd Street and from 3rd Avenue to 6th Avenue, she said.

The DFZ began taking cases as a tenants' advocacy group and have lost only one of 12 cases thus far, Marquez said.

Marquez said the FAC has four attorneys doing *pro bono* work on tenants' behalf, but many are settled before going to court.

Many of the buildings in the Park Slope area are brownstones and the main problem came from absentee landlords who do not live in the neighborhood, Marquez said.

According to New York City housing laws, tenants of building with fewer than six units have no rights in regard to rent regulations, meaning their rent increases are not regulated and they can be more easily evicted.

Buildings with more than six units are under rent stabilization laws. These laws currently call for a four-percent increase on one-year leases and six-percent increases on two-year leases.

Slope Tenants Group Stands Against Gentrification

Continued from cover

The FAC called a community meeting November 18 at the Park Slope YMCA, 357 9th Street to announce the DFZ lines being redrawn and to discuss strategy and enlist local landlord and tenant support for their efforts.

Among the ideas discussed was demonstrating in front of the numerous real estate agencies that are located on or around 7th Avenue.

But Marquez said that strategy might not work, as real estate agents don't actually own the buildings in question.

Marquez said a continuation of what the group has been doing is a more effective plan of action, but the group remains open to ideas from the community.

The current plan of action includes trying to negotiate a compromise between the landlord and the tenant once their case is taken.

If that doesn't work, more direct action is taken such as generating letters to the landlord through local religious organizations, demonstrating in front of the landlord's

home or place of business and generating media attention, Marquez said.

About 50 residents and landlords living in the area attended the meeting and Marquez was pleased with the results.

"The feedback we got at the meeting is they [the community] are interested and everybody is on the same page and wants to help join to save this community," Marquez said.

Besides FAC's advocacy efforts on behalf of tenants, the organization owns about 45 buildings with a total of 612 housing units mostly in Park Slope, but also some in Carroll Gardens and Boerum Hill.

Marquez said the buildings include one single-room-occupancy, family rental units and low-income co-ops.

There are about 2,000 people on a waiting list to get into FAC buildings, with the wait being a year or two, and includes emergency lotteries. The FAC office phone number is 857-2990.

"We're trying to get more buildings to open to shorten the list," Marquez said.



Residents discuss the Displacement Free Zone at the Park Slope YMCA, Nov. 18.

Photos by Paul Martinko



Park Slope Resident Stephen Cardella makes a point about tenant's rights.



Park Slope Brownstone owner Pat Conway.



Park Slope resident Gloria Mattera discusses problems between landlords and tenants.



Tom Slater, a London scholar who researches urban gentrification.

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Figure 2 - Action research in Lower Park Slope (see bottom right). (Source: Park Slope Courier, November 26th 2001).

was completed, which in itself is action research if it does make a positive contribution to the community, and only time will determine the significance of that contribution.

Greenwood and Levin (1998, p.104-8) argue that the action researcher must know how to be 'the friendly outsider', a complex role which calls for character traits such as effective communication of knowledge and skills, self-confidence, risk-taking, and even playfulness and ironic humour. I like to think that I don't lack these traits, but Greenwood and Levin are not geographers and thus ignore the particular local circumstances which might greet the friendly 'outsider' and how friendliness is not always matched by those the action researcher approaches. Many times in the field I was made to feel even more 'foreign' than I already was, especially in the U.S., something that was probably made worse by the tangible suspicion of foreigners following September 11th. I am convinced that if I had been an American, and especially a New Yorker, my prospects for more fruitful action research would have been far greater. Another critical issue which may affect the action researcher is how academics are valued by the group or community in question. One of action research's foremost practitioners, Randy Stoecker (1997) argues that the academic can either be the initiator (in mobilising resources and community organising), the consultant (to a project already in action) or the collaborator (where there is equal participation in every step of the project), but I would argue that sometimes the academic can be seen as none of the above, and this can be a serious barrier to action research and the academic attempting to *become* an initiator, consultant or collaborator. I found that in both neighbourhoods there was considerable suspicion of whether I was genuine and willing to share the results of my study, which is perhaps a poor reflection of colleagues who had walked through the doors of community organisations before me. This situation was compounded when I was asked by the Fifth Avenue Committee to "measure displacement in our neighbourhood", something which is almost impossible to undertake quantitatively because of the absence of data on the displaced, and something which was not to be part of my research nor something I had the time or the resources to attempt. When I explained these problems to the individual who asked me to measure displacement, he seemed unimpressed, saying that he had spoken to an economist who said there is an 'econometrics tool' designed specifically to address residential turnover! I told

him this was not something in which I was skilled, nor had the time to do, and this deflated the rising progress I was making towards collaboration at the time. A key problem for action researchers, then, is making sure that your own research agenda is fulfilled and coincides with the interests of the particular organisation with whom the researcher is collaborating. My own qualitative action research in New York, while occasionally a useful dialogue, was hindered by comments of the Committee such as “We already have enough anecdotal evidence, thanks” and “What we really need is a statistician to give us some numbers to strengthen our case!”. This is not to criticise the Committee – it was a matter of chance and circumstance that their needs were different to the kind of work I was doing. It is merely to point out that action research can meet unforeseen barriers, and sometimes no amount of negotiation or persuasion will result in the collaboration envisioned at the start of the research.

3.4 Additional methods

Interviews coupled with action research, then, were the main methods I used to gather primary data on two gentrifying neighbourhoods. Little time needs to be spent discussing the methods I used to gather secondary data, because these data were simply to provide a background screen on which to project the primary qualitative data – the general descriptive context in which gentrification is taking place. The additional methods were therefore no different to what might be expected in a Ph.D thesis on gentrification, and involve somewhat unspectacular yet essential sources of basic information. The steady and careful selection of relevant media publications was particularly useful in constructing a historiography of each neighbourhood (especially South Parkdale), to back up the oral histories of place that my interviewees provided. I found that secondary media sources can be usefully combined with primary interview sources, rather like the piecing together of a jigsaw puzzle to provide a story of a neighbourhood. Other methods included the collection of housing data either in the form of either government censuses or special reports undertaken by appropriate authorities; additional descriptive census data on intra-urban social change (i.e. demographics, employment, educational attainment); the careful scrutiny or ‘decoding’ of policy documents related to gentrification; and the study of archival material from local libraries to provide the historical backdrop to gentrification. Throughout what follows, the reader will encounter simple graphic

presentations of much of these data. I am not a quantitative geographer and certainly not a statistician, so manipulation of the data using statistical calculations will not be evident. I appreciate the shortcomings of a study which does not combine rigorous quantitative measures with detailed qualitative accounts, but believe that the strength of this project lies in the depth of the analysis of the qualitative data, and the vital step forward from earlier gentrification debates.

A final point demands attention – qualitative international comparative research is very time consuming. In addition to the fact that I had to relocate from London to Toronto, then from Toronto to New York, and look for accommodation in each case-study neighbourhood upon arrival (no easy task at a time when both cities have a very tight rental housing market), I only had six months research time in each location. It is extremely difficult to undertake in-depth primary research in such a short space of time, and it thus came as no surprise that, in both neighbourhoods, I had to leave when it felt like I was making real progress and had established myself as part of the community! There is a limit to how much primary research can be done alongside the necessary secondary research that one must undertake upon arrival. Ideally I would have liked at least a year's research time in each neighbourhood, following the traditions of observation and interpretation in human geography which require a methodology of sustained 'engagement not detachment' (Ley, 1988). Frustratingly, rigorous comparative research and Ph.D completion deadlines do not go hand in hand, so at the very least, I hope that the reporting which constitutes the remainder of this thesis gives an accurate 'taster' of what *could* have been achieved and learned if I had remained in each neighbourhood for longer than six months.

It is now time to turn to the analysis of the evidence which I collected, beginning with South Parkdale, followed by Lower Park Slope, and then an attempt to link the evidence together to assess the subtle similarities and differences I observed between two gentrifying neighbourhoods.

CHAPTER 4 - SOUTH PARKDALE, TORONTO, CANADA: FROM DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION TO GENTRIFICATION

“An amble through Parkdale to Liberty Village is the best show in town. No other half-hour stroll in this city covers such diverse social and economic terrain in so small a geographical area. Explore a residential street: Cowan, Dunn or Elm Grove. On a sunny fall evening, clean-cut homeowners pick broken glass and used condoms out of organic front yards and fat bourgeois cats warily survey bemuscled [sic] pit bulls reined in by street-smart youth. Turning east and running the strange and noisy King/Dufferin gamut of fast food, overcrowded medical clinics and busy-by-midday taverns, expect encounters with the visibly poor and/or mentally ill. Then, across Dufferin and south on Mowat, the huge Carpet Factory building - a slim, red-brick beauty - appears on the left. This area - bordered by King, Dufferin, the Gardiner and the railroad tracks - has lately adopted the name ‘Liberty Village’. Here, Parkdale feels as distant as the Bronx. Bike-couriers and mid-morning lineups for organic coffee and fresh muffins at the Warehouse Grill or the Roastery bespeak a hard-working and nice-earning influx of new businesses and educated labour. Shiny SUVs, Audis and new Beetles line parking spaces outside lofts, and sandblasters are hard at work on one building, polishing away a century’s urban grime” *Eye Magazine*, Toronto, Oct. 25th 2001 (Pugh, 2001).

In Chapters 2 and 3 I set up the theoretical and methodological framework for a comparative empirical assessment of gentrification between two neighbourhoods – South Parkdale, Toronto, and Lower Park Slope, New York City. In this chapter I concentrate on the first of these, reporting on research undertaken in South Parkdale from January to mid-July 2001. I will place the neighbourhood under a microscope and deliver a detailed historiography of a complex, misunderstood inner-city district which in many ways exemplifies twentieth century urban change in Toronto, but also exhibits many unique characteristics which make it a fascinating case study for a geographer interested in gentrification. Evidence drawn from a range of sources - interviews, observations, historical archives, media and planning reports and statistical data – will fuel a narrative of a place which, curiously, has never been the sole focus of an intensive social scientific investigation. Many questions are posed by this neighbourhood, of which I attempt to answer a few, but the reader will soon realise that a great deal more work across many disciplines of social science is needed if one is to paint a holistic portrait of the social problems facing a changing neighbourhood in the west end of Canada’s largest city.

4.1 South Parkdale 1872-1953: “The Village by the Lake”

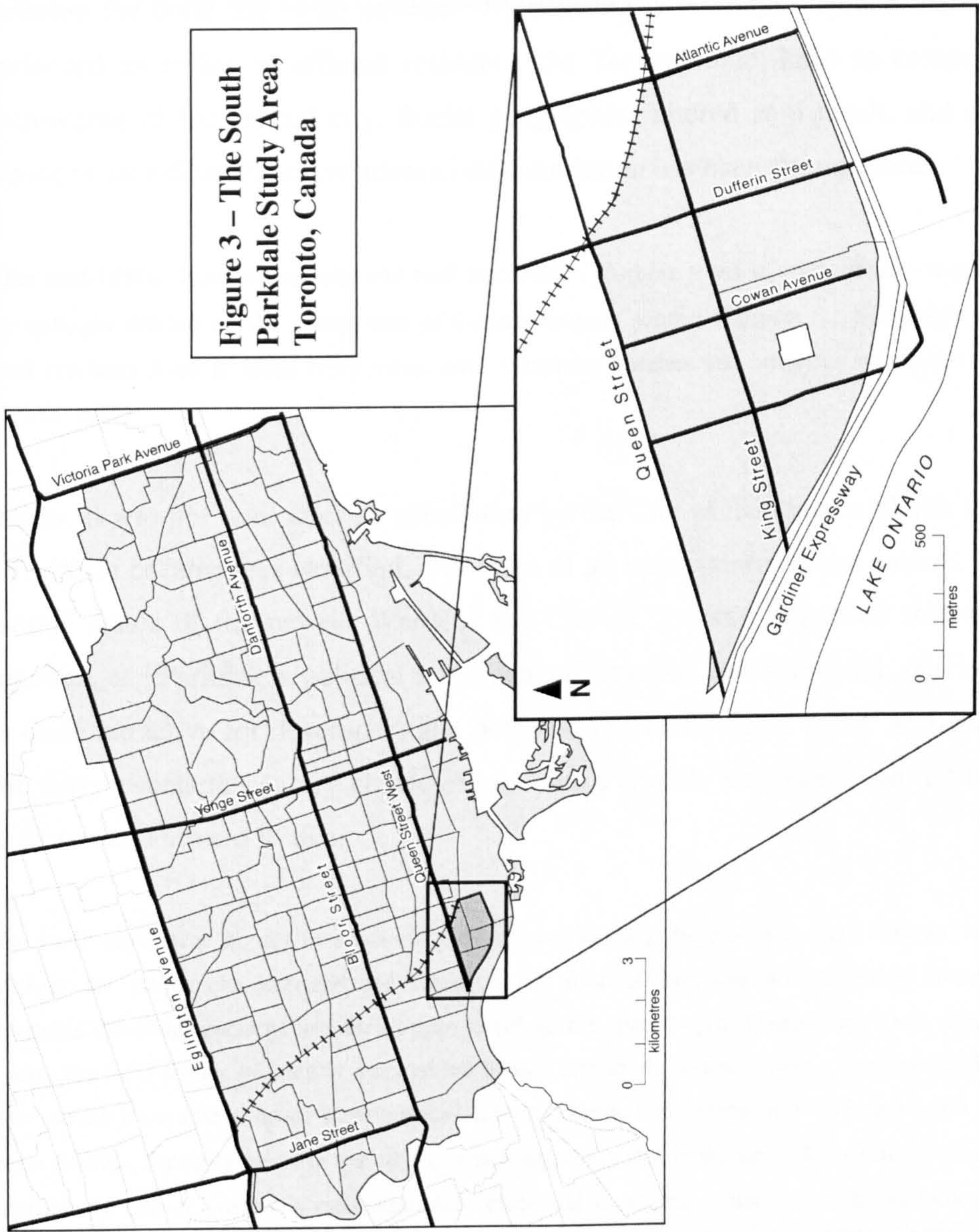
The inner-city district that today constitutes South Parkdale actually began life as a rural retreat from the centre of Toronto. Between 1872 and 1878, this small agricultural settlement became a small village, growth which has been attributed to the subdivision and sale of blocks of land following the death of three of Toronto’s major 19th century landowners (Laycock and Myrvold, 1991, p.10). The Toronto House Building Association was the earliest and most boisterous of the developers who tried to promote the district, acquiring land and building property from circa 1875. Close examination of the available archives shows that Parkdale’s¹⁶ site offered considerable advantages. *The Parkdale Register* of 1881 (Scott, 1881) noted that

“The site is higher than that of the major portion of Toronto, and is exceedingly picturesque, being surrounded by a landscape that possesses all the varying attractions afforded by the beautiful [Lake] Ontario, and the diversified scenery of an undulating expanse of fertile country, wooded, watered, cultivated and adorned with attractive homes” (p.1).

Laycock and Myrvold (1991, p.11) continue to point out that two major groups were enticed by these advantages – merchants and professionals, and company owners and managers, joining the largest population group, railway and local factory workers. In June 1878, when it was calculated that the population of the area had passed 750, the minimum number for incorporation, it was officially proclaimed a village, and in January 1879, a municipality in its own right, independent from the two major municipalities of Toronto and York. The village grew into one of Toronto’s first commuter suburbs, facilitated by the development of railways and streets, and in the 1880s, by the Queen and King Street horse-drawn streetcars and the construction of a subway (tunnel) beneath the railway at the intersection of Queen and Dufferin streets. Combined with a new administration and the growth of public services, Parkdale’s population grew rapidly in the 1880s to over 5,500 residents (ibid. p.27). Streets were laid out to facilitate resident access south to Lake Ontario, and north to

¹⁶ It should be noted here that the ‘present site’ referred to here has wider geographical boundaries than the neighbourhood under scrutiny in this study – Parkdale proper is the area bordered by Lake Ontario to the south, Dufferin and the rail tracks to the east and north and High Park to the west. See Figure 3.

**Figure 3 – The South
Parkdale Study Area,
Toronto, Canada**



Queen Street which became Toronto's main thoroughfare for commerce and trade, a condition unaltered today. In the 1880s, Toronto newspapers dubbed Parkdale 'The Floral Suburb', a reference to the result of the efforts by a Village Improvement Society, formed to beautify the streets and gardens of Parkdale in an attempt to make Parkdale the 'model village of the province' (ibid. p.25). As its reputation for harbouring the good life in an aesthetically pleasing environment spread, Parkdale experienced an influx of affluent residents, the Toronto elite, keen to escape the overcrowding of the central city. Social geographies altered as a result, and early evidence of stratification and residential differentiation has been documented:

"By the mid-1880s, Parkdale society was well stratified. Workers lived in rows of one- and two-storey cottages erected on the streets east of Cowan Avenue south of Queen.... Parkdale's most affluent residents lived in large brick villas with numerous porches and verandas overlooking the lake" (ibid. p.26).

However, it was not until after its annexation by the City of Toronto in March 1889 that Parkdale became less stratified, and more of an upper-middle class suburb. The economic status of the newest Ward of the City of Toronto improved following annexation, as "Parkdale's political and financial situation had stabilized, making it even more attractive for developers and potential residents" (ibid. p.35). Something of the early twentieth century character of South Parkdale has been captured by a local historian, Howard Walker:

"In the early days large homes in spacious grounds overlooking the bay with their owners' boats moored at the jetties characterized the scene at the foot of Jameson and Dowling Avenues. Comfortable dwellings on large lots then began to fill up the spaces up to Queen Street and within a few years the lofty arches of healthy trees added beauty and shade to the avenue. Commuters from the new suburb were able to board trains on Springhurst Avenue a few steps from its intersection with Jameson Avenue, for daily travel to the city. It is not surprising that in the early 20th century Parkdale was considered one of Toronto's most desirable residential locations, a distinction shared only with the district of Rosedale¹⁷ which was also taking shape at the same time" (quoted in CTPB, 1976, p.7).

¹⁷ Rosedale, not physically affected by post-World War II metropolitan restructuring, has retained this status (see Ley, 1993). Many interviewees informed me that South Parkdale was also dubbed 'The Rosedale of the South' in its early days.

This was a time of a housing construction boom, and substantial investment in South Parkdale continued up to circa 1910, when nearly all the vacant lots had been filled. Cutting edge Gothic Revival housing, known locally as ‘bay and gable’, was built for the increasing upper-middle class population (Plate 1), next door to the imposing mansions built in earlier decades for the elite (Plates 2 and 3). A differentiated housing stock was thus in existence by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, and as we shall see later, major post-war changes to South Parkdale ensured even more differentiation, rising to a crescendo by the mid-1960s.

In their interesting history of development and redevelopment along Toronto’s waterfront, Desfor, Goldrick and Merrens (1988) argued that the late nineteenth-century appearance of railways alongside the shore of Lake Ontario meant that “the waterfront’s potential as a public amenity was effectively destroyed” (p.96). This was largely true for much of the city’s waterfront, but the authors ignored the subsequent development of one small stretch of shoreline just to the west of South Parkdale which, irrespective of the noisy railway which hugged its borders, became *the* major public amenity of Toronto. This was the post-World War I development of the Sunnyside Amusement Park and Bathing Pavilion, under the auspices of the Toronto Harbour Commission, which further increased the appeal of South Parkdale. Sunnyside opened for business in 1922, and was a remarkable success from the day it opened, gaining the official title of ‘The Playground by the Lake’ (Filey, 1996). It was in many ways Toronto’s Coney Island, and with its success, South Parkdale quickly became known as the ‘Village by the Lake’, even though it was by now a sizeable district of the City of Toronto. As has been noted in a 1976 planning report, “until World War II, South Parkdale tended to be a stable community, insulated from the dramatic evolution and acute housing crisis the rest of the city was experiencing” (CTPB, 1976, p.8).

This is not to suggest, however, that the 1930s Depression and widespread unemployment did not result in some changes to South Parkdale’s residential landscape. A few of the substantial mansions of the late 19th century proved too costly to maintain for the children of the families whose wealth had led to their construction, and as a result were subdivided into smaller lodgings and rooming houses (Laycock and Myrvold, 1991, p.36). In the immediate aftermath of World

War II, these dwellings accommodated soldiers returning to Toronto from service overseas (CTUDS, 1997), but care must be taken to distinguish this period of rooming house dwelling from the far more prolific period to be discussed later in this chapter. Rooming houses were still few and far between at the time and no numbers are available on just how many large dwellings were subdivided. It is clear, however, that the ‘glory years’ of the ‘Village by the Lake’ ended in the 1930s, in tandem with an unprecedented upheaval in the global political economy, and an era in Toronto which Hiebert (1995) describes as “a time of massive immigration, economic change and social ferment” (p.55). The most profound changes to the neighbourhood, however, were yet to come, and it is to these we now turn.

4.2 South Parkdale 1954-1982: Disinvestment and deinstitutionalization

4.2.1 Metropolitan restructuring and the construction of the Gardiner Expressway

“All the arguments over whether Sunnyside should be moved having ended with a decision that it should, workmen are now busy tearing down the old buildings. It is a good thing, of course, to get the rickety roller-coaster, the merry go-round, the miniature auto course and the assorted hot dog and lemonade stands out of the way. They were in the path of the new Lakeshore Expressway. *Nothing can be permitted to hold up progress*” (Editorial in *The Toronto Star*, January 23rd, 1956. Quoted in Filey, 1996, p.131, emphasis added).

In the 1950s and 1960s the Toronto metropolitan area became a prime site of modernist planning in North America (Sewell, 1993; Kipfer and Keil, 2002), and the dramatic changes in its urban form and function can be taken as axiomatic of the many trends and growth orientations sweeping Canadian and American cities in those two decades. Underpinned by Keynesian demand management in the wake of the Depression and the parallel of postwar Fordist industrialization, Toronto experienced a steady transformation of its built and social form. Automobile-driven suburbanization on a massive scale, office-building construction in the central city, inner-city ‘slum clearance’ and renewal, modest and targeted public housing developments, federal mortgage insurance programs, and (until the late 1960s) selective immigration policies and the development of the Welfare State, all contributed to this transformation (Lemon, 1993; Kipfer and Keil, 2002). Toronto quickly overtook Montreal as the nation’s foremost urban centre in terms of both

population and economic importance (Murdie, 1996; Germain and Rose, 2001). This has been attributed to its emergent role as a host to banking, insurance and stock market headquarters with English language (as opposed to French) usage, the development of the northern Ontario resource industry of which profits were returned to its management in Toronto, and the reorientation of foreign investment from Europe to the United States, especially with respect to automotive assembly plants in southern Ontario (Caulfield, 1994, p.41; Murdie, 1996, p.207). Caulfield (1994) also points out that urban growth was supported and facilitated by all three levels of Canadian government – the vital public policy axis which enabled Toronto to expand outward and upward in a manner not dissimilar to what was happening in urban America.

It is instructive to turn to the ideology underpinning such massive expansion, for it was to have such profound material effects on the neighbourhood under investigation in this thesis. The modernist ideology was, as the word would imply, very much a break with tradition and what was viewed a constrictive past. Kipfer and Keil (2000) summarise:

“Postwar urban planning in Toronto turned away from much of the city’s earlier development as a conservative protestant, Victorian ‘city of homes’, which Ernest Hemingway described in the 1920s as a ‘sanctimonious icebox’” (p.29).

Caulfield (1994) is more trenchant in his assessment of modernism in Toronto, calling it “an approach to city-building rooted in a perception of the historical urban landscape as a problem to be solved by cataclysmic refashioning” (p.52). He uses the influential 1930s arguments of Sigfried Giedion (Giedion, 1967) on the industrial city as overcrowded, dirty, poverty-stricken and pathologically chaotic to illustrate that Toronto city planners were fearful of what might happen to the city should the 1930s status quo have continued. Giedion advocated an updated form of Hausmannization – specifically, the razing of ‘slums’ by expressways for the ‘common good’, irrespective of who or what might be directly affected by this razing, and an ideological reorientation from perceived disorder towards order, efficiency, and urban unification by industrial and employment decentralization. Caulfield rightly contends that it is arguments such as these which provided the

moral and political justification for modernist planning principles, a contention to which Ley (1991) lends weight when he points out that pathological images of the inner-city in both popular and academic publications have “proven extraordinarily tenacious, and provided a substantial motivation to the urban renewal and slum clearance programs in Canada and other Western nations in the post-war period” (p.323). The ethos of modernist planning can thus be defined as somewhat anti-urban, a suspicion of the values of old downtown neighbourhoods in favour of new, decentralized neighbourhoods of order, efficiency and homogeneity. It is perhaps Filion (1999) who provides the most precise summation of this planning ethos:

“Consistent with modernism’s anti-traditionalism, planning visions of the [1959-62] period turned their back on the prewar urban form, depicted as ill-suited to prevailing preferences and needs because of traffic congestion, inadequate parking, deteriorating housing conditions and insufficient green space. The spread of slums was indeed an obsession of the time which sanctioned the call for extensive redevelopment and revitalization efforts” (p.428).

In addition, modernism was in many ways legitimised by the pro-development political boosterism of the age, or as Caulfield (1994) neatly called it, “an unwavering belief in the ‘righteousness’ of urban expansion, that was nearly religious in its fervour” (p.56).

The policy mechanism by which this urban expansion took place was the Metro Official Plan, drawn up in 1960 to implement bold infrastructure improvements. The hallmark of the Plan was a regional expressway increment from 130 to 325 kilometres, including the construction of four brand new expressways (Filion, 1999, p.429). The Metro Official Plan lent credence to a project which had been conceived as early as 1948 and had been underway since 1955 – the construction of an expressway heading west from downtown Toronto to connect with the Queen Elizabeth Way, the major route between Toronto and Buffalo in the USA. At a time when the private automobile began to rule, expressways leading to this kind of suburban, outward expansion were signs of economic and social progress, as the quotation which begins this section attests. The proposed route of the ‘Lakeshore Expressway’ went right through the heart of the Sunnyside Amusement Park and the southern reaches of South Parkdale lining Lake Ontario. Planners of the Expressway

were quick to point out that its completion would ease the severe traffic congestion in the west end of Toronto¹⁸, adding impetus to the growing belief that the Amusement Park was just in the way of progress (Filey, 1996, p.82). The wrecking ball entered early in 1956, and by the spring of that year the Sunnyside Amusement Park was no more.

Even more significant to this study was another demolition job - the 1954 razing of 170 houses in South Parkdale once the Lakeshore Expressway plans were approved (Caulfield, 1994, p.33). Not only did Sunnyside disappear, but a sizeable swathe of South Parkdale was effectively flattened in anticipation of the construction of what became the Frederick G. Gardiner Expressway, renamed in honour of the metropolitanist former Mayor of Toronto who was instrumental in its development. Figure 4, a map drawn up in 1903, shows the streets that disappeared to the south of the railway track, which by 1954 were all lined with houses rather than the occasional dwelling depicted on this map. Together with a revamped Lakeshore Boulevard, the completion of the Expressway meant that South Parkdale was completely sliced off from Lake Ontario, perhaps the principle amenity which had encouraged its settlement and growth, and now the neighbourhood ended at the railway tracks rather than the water's edge (Plate 4).

South Parkdale in 1954 was not a 'slum' – yet an astonishing stretch of the imagination and exercise of power by the City of Toronto labelled it a slum to be cleared. It might therefore seem remarkable that there was little resistance to the Expressway, but this can be explained by reference to two factors: changes in home ownership, and the powerful ideology of modernist planning. The former has been detailed in a planning study undertaken in the 1970s:

“The large houses characteristic of South Parkdale were originally occupied by relatively large and affluent family households. By the 1950s the children of resident families had become young adults who moved away from home and established independent households..... Some older residents moved out of the area to quieter neighbourhoods, encouraged by what seemed to be attractive prices

¹⁸ It is interesting here to consider the conclusion made by Caulfield (1994) when reflecting on the 'success' of modernist planning: “The effect of the metropolitan expressway projects...was not to purge Toronto's streets of the damaging effects of car traffic – the urban modernists' hope – but instead to dump more and more vehicles into downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods” (p.59)!



Figure 4 - South Parkdale, 1903 (Source: CTPB, 1976).

offered for houses in the area..... [M]ost of the large houses bought in this period went to developers and to the government (for the construction of the expressway)” (CTPB, 1976, p.13).

The gradual movement out of South Parkdale was initiated by the profits to be made from the rising land values of the increasingly crowded central city. In tandem with massive new housing construction in the suburbs, people began to sell up and take advantage of the cheaper costs of living in new residential districts away from the central city (Filion, 1999). It was not that South Parkdale was an unattractive or insalubrious location; rather, the economic incentives to leave were manifold, and this effectively disbanded the strong attachments to place of South Parkdale’s resident families. The newer generation in particular, with weaker ties to the neighbourhood’s past, were enticed away from the ‘Village by the Lake’ and this effectively drained the potential pool for any kind of organised resistance to the Gardiner Expressway.

The second reason why the Expressway went through virtually unchallenged was simply that the ideology of modernist planning in the name of ‘progress’ was powerful to the point of being irresistible. Proof of this can be detected in the recent comments of Toronto’s current chief transportation engineer, Robert McBride:

“When it [the Gardiner Expressway] was built and designed in the 1960s, it was fabulous, a work of genius really.It didn’t much matter how sensitive the road was or what implications it might have had for the area it went over because that, by and large, simply wasn’t relevant” (quoted in Hall, 2001).

Such a steadfast refusal to consider the local implications of massive urban restructuring ensured that South Parkdale’s ‘better use’ was to be subservient to what was perceived as the common interest – the futuristic infrastructure improvements which would enable Toronto to compete with other North American¹⁹ metropolises and sustain the investment from the United States which had contributed to its expansion. South Parkdale had no choice in the matter as its glory days were now viewed as anachronistic in the face of an elevated, futuristic freeway that opened up

¹⁹ There are indeed some very interesting parallels with the type of urban restructuring and expansion taking place in the United States at the same time, particularly New York, and these will be drawn out in Chapter 6.

Toronto to greater riches; an attractive prospect at a time when the city's waterfront and central port were suffering from deindustrialization, neglect and decay (Desfor, Goldrick and Merrens, 1988). It is perhaps Fraser (1972) who summed up the attitudes of 1950s Toronto planners best of all: "they disliked old neighbourhoods simply because they were old" (p.57).

4.2.2 Immigration and housing change in South Parkdale during and after the Gardiner Expressway

Construction began on the South Parkdale stretch of the Gardiner Expressway in 1955, and was completed by 1959. The Expressway was officially opened in 1964, by which time it was elevated above the entire central city waterfront and connected with the Don Valley Parkway in the east end of Toronto. Margaret, who grew up in South Parkdale and lived there until her early twenties, remembers the neighbourhood before and after the construction:

"We were one of the few families who remained throughout, because we were a little further up Dunn Avenue, and I was helping my mother with the maintenance payments on our house after my father died. It was very strange that the street suddenly ended at the railway tracks. I can't remember the exact year it was sealed off, or if it was overnight or not, but I do remember my mother receiving a letter from the authorities saying that an Expressway was going to be built and that access to the Lake would soon only be a footbridge over Jameson Avenue, rather than just a walk down Dunn we had when I was little. Looking back, I think of two different neighbourhoods – before the Gardiner, and after the Gardiner. Before was a community, and every street had a similar character, but after was just plain sad, as people moved away and their houses were knocked down for the apartment buildings, like on Jameson Avenue. I remember cycling up Jameson both before and after it changed, and my, did it change! It's amazing to think that it was allowed to happen, but there was no organisation to stop it, and probably nothing we could have done as the city wanted to be like New York and expand outwards. I now think of the Gardiner as like a botched piece of surgery – an ugly result, and nothing but pain afterwards" (interview, March 15th, 2001).

With "their houses were knocked down for the apartment buildings", Margaret is referring to not only the Gardiner Expressway, but another major beacon of modernist planning that was taking shape in many Toronto neighbourhoods during the course of its construction, especially in those away from the downtown core (Filion, 1999; Kipfer and Keil, 2002). The development of high-rise apartment buildings was a consequence of massive demand for housing in an expanding

metropolis experiencing an immigration boom, and exorbitant land costs in the core which forced investors to seek land in districts away from downtown (CTPB, 1976, p.13). I noted earlier that South Parkdale's increasing land costs were an incentive for many homeowners to sell up and move away, but for property developers, the land costs were lower relative to other central city locations. With its excellent public transit links just a few miles from downtown, the neighbourhood was a perfect location for these developers, and their acquisition and manipulation of land was facilitated by relaxed zoning controls which permitted residential densities greatly in excess of many neighbourhoods closer to Downtown. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, streets of handsome, detached single family homes such as Jameson, Spencer and Tyndall Avenues were thus rapidly transformed into canyons of high-rise apartment buildings (Plate 5). While some high-rise social housing was built, nearly all the new developments were privately owned and managed, and remain that way today. Again, little or no resistance took place because of the exodus of people with emotional ties to the neighbourhood, and also the devalorization of land during and after the Expressway construction.

The neighbourhood's housing stock was thus by the mid-1960s even more differentiated than before World War II, slicing the neighbourhood up into sub-areas, each with their own concentrated residential and social character. The City of Toronto rightly pointed out in 1976 that "the construction of apartment buildings was the main factor responsible for the rapid growth of households and the change in household composition in South Parkdale after World War II" (CTPB, 1976, p.47). One of the more striking aspects of 1950s and '60s restructuring and household change in South Parkdale was a dramatic change in tenure. Not only were there new tenants in the high-rise apartment developments, but a number of homeowners chose not to sell their houses, and instead converted their sizeable properties into multiple units for the purpose of renting them to tenants – perhaps to cover mortgage payments for their new dwellings in other neighbourhoods and the suburbs. A supply of tenants was plentiful as new immigrants arrived in Canada, and these and other low-income people in search of affordable accommodation in a very tight housing market found it in South Parkdale, under conditions which they arguably had no choice but to accept. Between 1951 and 1971, the population of South Parkdale grew by almost 40%, from 13,693 to 19,140 (Table 2), and it is most interesting to

note that by 1971, 90% of all households in the neighbourhood were tenant households (Statistics Canada, 1971 Census of Population), and furthermore, dwelling units occupied by homeowners comprised only 7% of the entire housing stock of the neighbourhood (ibid.)²⁰.

Table 2 – Total Population of South Parkdale, 1941-1996. Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Year	South Parkdale population
1941	12573
1951	13693
1961	16771
1971	19140
1981	18561
1991	21007
1996	21867

During this same time period, the total number of households increased by 136%, and single-person households as a proportion of all households more than doubled, which is interesting when considered alongside the fact that households consisting of over five persons declined from over 25% of the total households in 1951 to 5% in 1971 (Statistics Canada, 1951, 1971 Censuses of Population). In addition, non-family households grew from 28% of all households in 1951 to 46% in 1971 (ibid.). Based on these data, it is clear that during and after the Expressway construction, South Parkdale experienced an exodus of large families (from single family homes which were either demolished or converted into multiple units) and an influx of singles. There was, however, a significant increase in the number of *smaller* families with children, especially in the census enumeration districts containing new

²⁰ All the descriptive data in this chapter are figures calculated from returns in South Parkdale’s four census tracts (004, 005, 007.01, 007.02).

apartment buildings, whereas single persons tended to be located in the districts containing converted family dwellings (CTPB, 1976, p.46-7). It is the presence of 'singles' which is seen by the municipal government as detrimental to the 'health' of South Parkdale, and this crucial issue will be explored in subsequent sections.

These changes to the housing stock must be viewed in the context of the immigration trends during the time-frame under discussion. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to assess fully the impact of post-war immigration to the changing social geographies of South Parkdale, but a brief account of immigration history and patterns is necessary to provide the demographic context in which recent gentrification has been taking place. The neighbourhood largely retained its roots as a community of Anglo-Scottish-Irish settlers until after World War II, when Canadian cities experienced the arrival of immigrants from Southern and especially Eastern Europe on a substantial scale. As Bourne and Rose (2001) point out, in the immediate post-war period "roughly 80 percent of all immigrants came from traditional European source countries" (p.109; see also Murdie, 1996, p.208). It was this phenomenon that was responsible for the general decrease in the proportion of residents of "British Isles origin" in South Parkdale during the post-war period and an increase in French, German, Ukranian and especially Polish settlers during the same time (CTPB, 1976, p.36). Table 3 shows the single (as opposed to multi-) ethnic origin of South Parkdale residents by 1971:

Table 3 - Ethnic origin of residents, 1971, by single origin. Source: Statistics Canada, 1971 Census of Population

Ethnic Origin	South Parkdale	City of Toronto
Asian	7.0%	4.8%
British Isles	51.7%	45.8%
French	5.9%	3.7%
German	4.4%	3.3%
Hungarian	1.5%	1.1%
Italian	1.4%	12.6%
Netherlands	1.1%	0.8%
Polish	4.0%	3.1%
Russian	0.3%	0.3%
Scandinavian	0.7%	0.5%
Ukranian	3.8%	3.2%
Others	18.2%	20.8%

One can see that despite the aforementioned post-war decreases, people with roots in the British Isles were still the largest ethnic group in 1971. These figures, however, belie the tremendous transformations in immigration policy taking place at the time of their release. Immigration to Canada was transformed almost beyond recognition under the liberal policies of the federal government in 1968, following the election of Pierre Trudeau. This administration lifted the many restrictions on immigration which prohibited entry on the basis of nationality, citizenship, ethnic group and class, and implemented a much more ‘open-door’ policy, with no restrictions to any applicant for residence and citizenship on the basis of race, ethnicity or country of origin (Croucher, 1997). Bourne and Rose (2001) summarise the substantial demographic shift which intensified in the 1970s:

“[I]mmigration and refugee policy changes increasingly opened the door to those from non-traditional source countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. These countries were often

experiencing economic and/or political upheavals. By the 1990s these regions were furnishing almost 80% of Canada’s new immigrants, who are drawn from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds” (p.109-10).

Statistics Canada’s measurement of ethnic origin expanded with Canada’s increasing, policy-driven multiculturalism (Ley, 1984; Croucher, 1997), as the data from the 1986 census presented in Table 4 attest. While the new categories do not lend themselves for simple comparison with earlier data, note in particular the substantial decrease of British origin residents, the notable proportion of people under the new categories of Black, Chinese and South Asian, and the highest proportion of all being represented by ‘Other’ – a category which includes immigrants from the ‘non-traditional source countries’ in the continents listed above by Bourne and Rose.

Table 4 - Ethnic origin of residents, 1986, by single-origin. Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 Census of Population

Ethnic Origin	South Parkdale	City of Toronto
British	28.2%	39.6%
French	3.8%	2.7%
German	2.2%	3.0%
Italian	0.9%	11.9%
Netherlands	0.8%	1.4%
Polish	5.0%	2.1%
Scandinavian	0.2%	0.4%
Ukranian	3.2%	1.9%
Aboriginal	1.0%	0.2%
Black	8.4%	3.7%
Chinese	5.3%	5.2%
Jewish	0.9%	4.4%
South Asian	9.1%	4.3%
Others	31.0%	19.2%

As these data confirm, by the mid-1980s the neighbourhood had become a microcosm of an extraordinarily multicultural metropolis – a metropolis which later saw the arrival of 42% of all new immigrants to Canada between 1991 and 1996 (Bourne and Rose, 2001, p.110). The urbanization of immigration in Canadian cities has been well documented by numerous others (e.g. Beaujot, 1991; Halli and Driedger, 1999; Kazemipur and Halli, 2000) but it is useful to point out here that from the late-1960s onwards, devalorized, disinvested South Parkdale, with its diverse population and small immigrant support networks, its inner-city location with convenient access to the types of employment most readily available to new immigrants such as manufacturing and personal services (Murdie, 1996, p.224-5), and crucially for this study, its cheap rental accommodation in the wider context of Toronto's highly competitive rental housing market, was without question a 'gateway' neighbourhood for those seeking a new life in Canada's largest city. Far from being segregated along the lines of one race or ethnicity, the Village by the Lake had become one of the most ethnically diverse yet most economically traumatized communities in Canada.

While there was considerable demand for affordable housing in South Parkdale from low-income immigrants, it was not enough to curtail systematic disinvestment in the built environment in the two decades after the Gardiner Expressway. A visual survey undertaken by the City of Toronto in July 1975 found 40 vacant houses in the neighbourhood, 25 of which showed no signs of conversion, repair or maintenance work (CTPB, 1976, p.59). Further evidence of abandonment can be found by reading the local press around the time of this survey. One 1974 description (Dunn, 1974) of a huge vacant Victorian mansion on Brock Avenue is particularly poignant:

"The absence of people interested in maintaining it is beginning to show. The double garage at rear...is becoming decrepit. The airy verandas on the ground and second floors that once enhanced the façade have become drag and begun to sag, as woodwork does when it isn't looked after. Apart from this there is surprisingly little apparent damage to the house, considering its accessibility. Perhaps the quiet dignity of the place commands some respect from would-be vandals. Without care though, it is just a matter of time until stateliness slips away, leaving an oppressively gloomy old house. If it deteriorated into that condition even the most historically minded people in the neighbourhood would be content to see it torn down".

The building in question was purchased by an investment company from the estate of its long-time owner, and the company showed “no noticeable interest...in making these living quarters available to Parkdale residents”. As this newspaper rightly pointed out, the long-term intention of the investment company was to sit on the property until it could be sold for a sizeable profit. A survey of several issues of *The Parkdale Citizen* local newspaper in the early- to mid-1970s shows that housing issues, particularly the abandonment of handsome dwellings such as the one described above, were never far from being an issue of prime concern for residents at the time. Fears over blockbusting and the demolition of older properties were particularly strong, and they were coupled with fears over the construction of more high rises until zoning restrictions on height were enforced by the City of Toronto in many neighbourhoods in the 1970s, under a new political ideology of anti-modernist reform, which I summarised when discussing the work of Jon Caulfield in Chapter 2.

Of the non-high rise properties in South Parkdale which were occupied, I have already documented the gradual switch from owner-occupation to rental status following construction of the Gardiner Expressway. From the mid-1960s onwards but especially prolific in the 1970s, it was the conversion of single-family homes into absentee-owned, multi-unit rooming houses and ‘bachelorettes’ that was largely responsible for this switch of tenure. A *rooming house* (Plate 6) has been accurately defined as follows:

“[A]ny building in which renters occupy single rooms and share kitchens, bathrooms and common areas. The building may be a converted single-family house, a converted hotel, or a purpose-built structure. Rooming houses may have as few as three rooms for rent, or more than a hundred” (Rupert Coalition for Rooming House Safety, 1997).

Absentee landlords and investment companies became a dominant feature of the housing stock of the neighbourhood during its devalorization in the wake of post-war restructuring. Fully aware of the profits to be made from the low-income population which was flocking into the neighbourhood at a time when housing costs were prohibitively high elsewhere in the city, and when no other form of exchange value could be realised from housing in a stigmatised neighbourhood, South Parkdale’s

streets of single-family homes turned into one of the highest concentrations of rooming houses in the city. A *bachelorette* can be defined as a mini-apartment, often converted from a rooming house unit - one room which simultaneously contains sleeping, living, food preparation and dining space, with a separate cupboard-sized bathroom within the unit. These began to proliferate in the mid-1970s because of the lack of tenant privacy in rooming houses with shared facilities, and the desires of rooming house landlords to increase the profitability of their operations. Zoning by-laws in South Parkdale at the time were sufficiently lenient to allow the conversion of rooming houses into bachelorette buildings, a process which has been described as follows:

“The developer...completely ‘guts’ the house leaving only the structural skeleton standing. In many instances, the floors and roofs are lifted to provide three or four completely occupied floors and extensions are made to the house thus increasing the density. With an expansion in the habitable gross floor area and contraction in the size of room (sometimes as small as 90 square feet), one house can be divided into as many as 25 bachelorettes” (CTPB, 1976, p.59).

The increase in the number of units from the previous rooming house total ensured that this became an extremely lucrative sector of the rental housing market, with a very high income-to-investment ratio for landlords – yet cramped and expensive (considering the square footage) for tenants. South Parkdale’s stock of large single-family homes, by the 1970s too expensive for one family to purchase (and, as we shall see, in a neighbourhood increasingly frowned upon by the middle-class), lent itself to profiteering landlords and investment firms, who crammed as many units as possible into one structure and ensured that a single-family home became an apartment building containing a number of tiny single-person dwellings.

Rooming houses and bachelorettes have been a crucial factor in the plight of the neighbourhood from the mid-1970s to the present day, and major reference points in how it is understood from the outside, to the point of being somewhat synonymous with South Parkdale. No social study of the neighbourhood’s gentrification can be undertaken without reference to rooming houses and bachelorettes, particularly their occupants, and it is to these we now turn.

4.2.3 Mental health policy and deinstitutionalization in South Parkdale

“Discharged psychiatric patients are independent citizens whose privacy is as inviolable as any other citizen’s. They have been treated for an illness and adjudged fit for discharge. As private citizens, they can, and do, live wherever they choose. Many of them choose to live in Parkdale because of the proximity of the psychiatric services” (Dennis Timbrell, former Ontario Minister of Health, letter to *The Globe and Mail*, 30th March 1980).

“Life was oozing out of the grizzled man on the blood-soaked mattress. Huge clots covered his clothing and the side of the bed; and as I lifted his arm to apply a tourniquet, I saw the self-inflicted gash across the inside of his elbow; the craft knife was on the bed next to him. In minutes an ambulance arrived to take the almost lifeless former mental patient to St. Joseph’s Health Centre. His small, dingy, almost empty basement room in a Parkdale boarding house in Toronto’s west end held few clothes, fewer possessions and no sign of friends or relatives. A community worker said the suicide attempt...was a result of depression associated with epilepsy, a drinking problem, and no support after his recent release from the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. His predicament is not unique” (Jock Ferguson, *The Globe and Mail*, 13th March 1981).

By the late 1970s, it was increasingly clear that South Parkdale was suffering from disinvestment as a consequence of its geographical position in Toronto. I have so far explored the first major factor leading to disinvestment – the impact of the Gardiner Expressway and the significant transformation of the housing stock in the wake of modernist planning experimentation. I now turn to consider the second major factor – the neighbourhood’s proximity to two large mental health institutions, the Lakeshore Provincial Psychiatric Hospital and the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. Not only was post-war South Parkdale in the way of ‘progress’ in the form of a massive six-lane Expressway, it was also sandwiched between these two institutions at a time when major changes to mental health policy were having serious material consequences in many inner-city districts in Canada and the United States. The radical shift of the provincial government towards the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients in favour of ‘community-based care’ together with the restructuring of the apparatus and operations of the Welfare State had profound and lasting effects on a neighbourhood already under stress from

metropolitan restructuring and devalorization. A brief historical account of this shift is necessary before describing these effects in detail²¹.

4.2.3.1 Deinstitutionalization and the lack of community care in Toronto

In the 1960s, changing public and professional attitudes towards the mentally ill – a move away from notions of insanity and madness to more sympathetic views on illness - paved the way for deinstitutionalization and the community mental health movement:

“Emphasis was placed upon the concept of community-based care since it was reasoned that the large state hospitals had done much to isolate the patient from society, retard living skills, and to induce a level of disability and dependence over and above that arising from the patient’s condition” (Dear and Taylor, 1982, p.47).

This is what Harvey Simmons, in his excellent history of twentieth-century mental health care in Ontario (Simmons, 1990), has called the ‘humanitarian argument’ on deinstitutionalization. The other argument is the economic, which holds that the decline in the number of patients in large mental hospitals was a direct result of fiscal pressures on “provincial governments unwilling to bear the continued and rising costs of mental health care” (p.157). What was alarming (though by no means unique) about the Ontario case was the astonishing and often tragic lack of community aftercare policies designed for discharged psychiatric patients, as the following sentences reveal:

“If by deinstitutionalization we mean a clearcut policy directed toward reducing the population of provincial psychiatric hospitals and establishing community services to receive discharged patients, then *no such policy ever existed in Ontario*. However, if by deinstitutionalization we mean a deliberate policy of reducing the long-stay population of the large mental hospitals *regardless of what*

²¹ It might seem odd that a discussion of gentrification focuses a lot of its attention on deinstitutionalization, but as I became more involved in the research process in South Parkdale, I began to realise that gentrification cannot be considered without such attention, for deinstitutionalization is the historical backdrop upon which current reinvestment is taking place. Moreover, as a community resident told me, “one of the biggest problems here is that gentrification is erasing the history of deinstitutionalization, kind of making a sad reality invisible rather than improving it” (Bob, interview, March 19th 2001).

happened to the patients afterward, then deinstitutionalization began in 1965” (ibid. p.160, emphasis added).

The Progressive Conservative provincial government of Ontario (in power from 1943-1985), instead of implementing a community-based mental health care plan, worked toward integrating psychiatric services with public health services. This led to a situation where ‘community’ mental health care was provided from psychiatric units attached to general hospitals, as well as from a small number of recognised ‘group homes’ (Dear and Taylor, 1982). From 1960 to 1975, the number of patients ‘on the books’ in Ontario provincial asylums dropped by almost 75%, and the number of discharges tripled (ibid. p.51). However, coping mechanisms and support networks for the discharged were virtually non-existent, leading to what might be described as ‘revolving-door syndrome’ where the proportion of patient readmissions doubled from 1960 to 1975 to form two-thirds of all admissions (ibid. p.51). As Dear and Wolch (1987) memorably put it, deinstitutionalization was “a policy adopted with great enthusiasm, even though it was never properly articulated, systematically implemented, nor completely thought through” (p.107). A more trenchant assessment was offered by Marshall (1982):

“All indications are that...deinstitutionalization, a purported dedication to the generally valid concept of treatment in the community, is in fact a neo-conservative euphemism for divestment of public responsibility as a way of saving money....in spite of the government’s own experts advising against it” (p.118).

The full effects of misguided health policies, or lack of them, were woven into the social fabric of inner-city Toronto in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They were particularly acute in the districts where ex-patients tended to congregate, nowhere more so than in South Parkdale, in close proximity to two large mental health institutions. The first of these, the Lakeshore Provincial Psychiatric Hospital, three miles to the west of South Parkdale, had by the mid-1970s deteriorated into a state where living conditions were ‘unacceptable’ for many of the seriously and chronically unwell inpatients undergoing treatment (Simmons, 1990, p.189). When Lakeshore closed in 1979, it was feared that psychiatric patients would “sink without a trace” and “simply go into the community and produce problems for the community and themselves” (ibid. p.190). Patients served by Lakeshore ended up

being victims of political negligence that was bordering on immoral – inpatients were transferred to already overcrowded and underfunded hospitals, and outpatients (the majority) ended up having to fend for themselves with virtually no kind of support system in place to ensure their adaptation to whatever ‘community’ they lived in.

The Queen Street Mental Health Centre, a fifteen-minute walk to the east of South Parkdale, was more fortunate than Lakeshore, completely redesigned and rebuilt from 1970-1972 to become the largest mental health care facility in Canada, serving over two-thirds of people with mental illness and addiction problems in the entire metropolitan area of Toronto – thus “a consistently vital resource” (Court, 2000). However, it discharged thousands of patients during the deinstitutionalization era, not least because it became saturated with demand following its absorption of most of Lakeshore’s catchment area. It was the discharge of patients from Queen Street in particular that was to have such a lasting impact on the social geographies of South Parkdale – institution and neighbourhood entwined through misguided political management to create a ‘landscape of despair’ (Dear and Wolch, 1987), distressed, complex, and as we shall see, thoroughly misunderstood.

4.2.3.2 Housing problems and the restructuring of the Welfare State

Simmons (1990) notes that the provincial government “refused to accept any responsibility for making available adequate housing or even to inspect and regulate existing housing for ex-patients” (p.169), and illustrating an unfortunate feature of Canadian politics, it “tried to fob off the problems of housing and aftercare onto municipal governments” (p.172). By the late 1970s it was clear to many that it was not deinstitutionalization per se which was the problem; indeed, in some instances it may have been a well-intentioned ideology to reintegrate patients into society. The problem was doubtless the lack of community care services for the mentally ill, particularly assistance in finding appropriate, cheap and safe accommodation. South Parkdale’s proximity to both Lakeshore and Queen Street cannot alone explain why ex-psychiatric patients began to accumulate within its borders – its housing stock and the characteristics in place following post-war restructuring played an equally important role in its emergence as a magnet for the mentally ill. The concentration of

group and boarding homes along with other relatively cheap rental accommodation in the form of rooming houses and bachelorettes were and remain crucial factors in South Parkdale's physical, social, cultural and economic transformation.

A *group home* has been defined by the Ontario provincial government as

"a licensed, single housekeeping unit in a residential dwelling in which three to ten unrelated residents live as a family under responsible supervision, consistent with the requirements of its residents. The house is licensed or approved under provincial statute in compliance with municipal by-laws" (Ontario Secretariat for Social Development, 1978, quoted in Dear and Wolch, 1987, p.102-3).

It should be noted that the usual residents of group homes are discharged psychiatric patients, the physically handicapped, people recovering from addiction problems, ex-offenders and so on. *Boarding homes* generally contain more residents, and are also commercial operations - but specifically room and board for ex-psychiatric patients, the elderly or the disabled, with far less strict supervision. Very little data is available on boarding homes, but a matrix of actors – service providers, land-use planners and community residents – have contributed to the highly uneven geography of group home location across the City of Toronto during the 1970s and 1980s (Dear and Wolch, 1987, p.102-6). In a major study undertaken by Dear and Taylor (1982), several Toronto neighbourhoods were profiled to determine the characteristics which led to different community attitudes toward the mentally ill. 'Accepting' neighbourhoods, that is, those with greater 'tolerance' of the mentally ill, featured relatively transient populations, a high population density, a differentiated housing stock, mixed land-uses, and few family-based households. By contrast, 'rejecting' neighbourhoods exhibited stable populations, low population density, predominantly single-family housing, a high proportion of families (and children) and higher income levels (p.153-4). The geographical distribution of community based mental health facilities such as group homes, speculated Dear and Taylor, would coincide with the geographical distribution of accepting and rejecting neighbourhoods (p.164), with the former holding a disproportionate share of these facilities.

Careful consideration of the above factors influencing group home location would lead us to conclude that, as far as the case of South Parkdale is concerned, Dear and

Taylor's speculations were well-founded. The neighbourhood is centrally located, has a sizeable supply of large dwellings which could house group homes, relaxed zoning by-laws, and possesses all of the characteristics of an accepting neighbourhood, some of which I have discussed in preceding sections. Hall and Joseph (1988) took Dear and Taylor's work further and asserted that the uneven geographical distribution of group homes in Toronto derived "more from the resistance characteristics of neighbourhoods than their suitability as host environments" (p.305). As a classic 'accepting' neighbourhood, South Parkdale lacked organised resistance to the establishment of group homes; thus it contained by far the largest share of official and unofficial psychiatric facilities in Toronto in the wake of deinstitutionalization. As Filion (1991, p.569) observed, "[w]ith a meagre 2% of Metropolitan Toronto's population, it holds a quarter of all adult group homes".

The disproportionate share of such facilities, however, should in no way be mistaken for evidence that the neighbourhood had anything approaching the number of community-based facilities and group homes to cope with the increasing flow of discharged mental patients. As Simmons (1990, p.168-9) pointed out, by 1981 it was estimated that between 1,000 to 1,200 ex-psychiatric patients lived in South Parkdale, in a neighbourhood containing only 39 'official' group homes for such patients (Joseph and Hall, 1985). This meant that there were approximately 30 people for each group home – clearly a woefully inadequate supply of housing when considering that each group home is supposed to contain only 3 to 10 residents. The 'responsible supervision' a group home was supposed to provide was thus only available to the few – a large majority had to find, mostly by themselves, alternative means of accommodation. With respect to the larger boarding homes, Dear and Wolch (1987, p.108) estimated that there were about 80 in South Parkdale by the early 1980s, but no official comprehensive survey has been undertaken and it is also likely that many rooming houses were mistaken for boarding homes (the terms are often used interchangeably). The lack of housing options for the discharged was a situation exacerbated in the autumn of 1980, when the provincial government ordered the staff at Queen Street "not to give any further housing assistance to patients about to be discharged", presumably to absolve themselves of responsibility should the housing turn out to be unsatisfactory, or the ex-patient unfit for the

dwelling (Ferguson, 1981, McLaren, 1981). In South Parkdale, ex-psychiatric patients who were not able to find living arrangements under the supervision provided by a commercial operation ended up in rooming houses and bachelorettes, many of low quality, or if circumstances were worse, homeless shelters or the street.

This serious housing crisis must be placed in the context of the significant upheaval in the Welfare State occurring at the same time as deinstitutionalization. In the years following the mid-1970s 'high-water mark' of the Welfare State in Canada (Hasson and Ley, 1994, p.26), there was a retreat from the public provision of welfare services as a consequence of economic recession in Ontario and a serious fiscal crisis at the provincial level. Several government reports concluded that state expenditure on social services was far too high, robbing the state of investment dollars and therefore contributing to inflation (Dear and Wolch, 1987; Lemon, 1993). Fiscal retrenchment meant massive cutbacks in social spending and welfare payments, the tightening of eligibility criteria for welfare recipients, regressive taxation, and the privatisation (and thus increasing cost) of many crucial public services – all with adverse affects on the poor and the disabled (Lemon, 1993; Hasson and Ley, 1994). A 1981 article in *The Globe and Mail* newspaper (Ferguson, 1981) pointed out that housing problems for the deinstitutionalized could largely be traced to the fact that most former patients ended up on welfare and paid almost 90 per cent of their welfare allowances in room and board:

“Virtually every former patient interviewed subsists on welfare at \$242 a month, or the slightly more generous family benefits allowance of \$337 a month. Most of this money goes for room and board, leaving as little as \$28 a month for clothes, transportation and other necessities”.

With such meagre welfare allowances, it was hardly surprising that former patients gravitated to South Parkdale, with its concentration of cheaper housing, welfare-oriented facilities, and access to the psychiatric outpatient facilities crucial to their survival. To claim that it was somehow a choice for discharged patients to move to this location, as did the former Ontario Minister for Health in the quotation which began this section, is greatly to misunderstand the nature of mental illness and greatly to gloss over the bleak prospects for a sufferer attempting to adapt to life in a far from benevolent outside world. It was through these misunderstandings and

adaptations that the social geographies of South Parkdale were dramatically altered, and this discussion will now focus briefly on what happened to the Toronto neighbourhood that absorbed the brunt of 1970s and 1980s deinstitutionalization. The broad purpose is to provide a sense of what the neighbourhood was like before gentrification began to creep over its borders – particularly relevant considering the conflict over the future of the neighbourhood that has been initiated by gentrification.

4.2.4 The discourse of decline in the liveable city

“[O]pposition lingers in many nearby residents – in the form of distrust, specific complaints, and a questioning of ‘why this street?’ and ‘why this neighbourhood?’ – feelings which can isolate the [group] home and its residents, give them the sense of living in a (not very well liked) goldfish bowl, and make difficult the establishment of positive ties between group home residents and their neighbours” (Piker, 1974).

An article in *The Toronto Star* in the summer of 1982 (Munch, 1982) referred to South Parkdale as “a psychiatric outpatient ghetto”, with a local politician commenting that any more group homes and boarding houses would “break the camel’s back” and that “no other community in the City of Toronto has a burden like that...we’ve taken our share, in fact more than our share [of psychiatric patients]” A few weeks earlier, an article in the same newspaper discussed the neighbourhood’s “little ghettos of misery” where “children are afraid to play outside” (Christie, 1982). Such evidence suggests that during the most intense period of deinstitutionalization (the 1970s and early 1980s), South Parkdale became what Dear and Wolch (1987) termed a ‘service-dependent ghetto’, an inner-city district featuring a “spatial concentration of service-dependent populations and the agencies and facilities designed to serve them” (p.9). I have touched on the social forces that led to this spatial concentration, but of even more interest to this project are the social consequences of these forces. These will now be examined by presenting some anecdotal evidence from my interviews with individuals who knew the neighbourhood in the immediate aftermath of deinstitutionalization.

Dear and Taylor (1982), in a work tellingly entitled ‘Not On Our Street’, have argued that due to a lack of comprehensive, organised community care and

awareness programs in Toronto, “neighbourhoods are typically unprepared for the influx of ex-psychiatric patients, who may find themselves in, but not part of, a community” (p.165). These individuals, often chronically unemployed, are differentiated from wider society by their almost total reliance on the public sector for basic wants and needs. As they arrive in already distressed neighbourhoods, more public services are needed to care for them; therefore “new services act as a catalyst in attracting further clients and so a self-reinforcing cycle is intensified” (ibid. p.9). Such neighbourhoods, whilst being crucial coping mechanisms for people subsisting below the poverty line, are very often the object of wider community antagonism because the concentrations of the welfare-dependent and the symptoms which accompany their condition are so *visible*. Interviews with residents and community activists in the neighbourhood painted a harrowing picture of streetlife for the deinstitutionalized in South Parkdale in the early 1980s. Many had addiction problems and were either a danger to themselves and any dependent children, or a nuisance to homeowners, as Jeanette, who lived in the neighbourhood from 1982 to 1988 revealed:

“After we moved in some of the issues were disconcerting: a strange woman walked in and I found her on my toilet smoking one month after moving in.... A man lived under my front porch for a few months having dragged a couch under there. I left him alone, he left me alone. One day he was gone. The greater issue was not psychiatric adults, it was their children left as latchkey children in dreadful weather. They lived in the parkette wading pool in summer, in snowsuits in winter. As my daughter grew to around four years old, I was glad to leave. I felt unsafe when the police were hopping into my landlocked backyard with flashlights and when my husband travelled frequently. I think really the drug houses were more the problem than the psychiatric houses. There was one up the street, now renovated.....that the cops were always going to, going backwards up Cowan, which is a one-way, at top speed, and lots of shouting. A little girl who lived in this drug house always reminded me of Roald Dahl’s ‘Matilda’. She must have been six, uncombed, poorly dressed and walked to the library herself. Very independent, and gave me dreadful looks when I asked if I could help her cross King [Street]. Her mother wore fuzzy slippers and a constant bathrobe and would appear screaming at any time of day at anyone and everyone with a beer bottle in hand” (interview, 19th March 2001).

Roger, a well-informed resident, was highly critical of the provincial government when he spoke about the lack of community care in South Parkdale: “What did they expect would happen? That people with serious mental illnesses would suddenly and miraculously be cured by the fresh air?” (interview, February 23rd, 2001). Some

would lash out in despair - a few residents spoke of ex-patients being a danger not only to themselves but others, as Maura, who moved away from the neighbourhood in 1994 after fifteen years of residence, explained:

“I would NEVER walk alone at night because of the schizophrenics who could flip at any moment and do God knows what. I also got sick and tired of all the prostitutes who walked the streets from 8pm to 8am. Things really changed for me when I was assaulted in my own driveway by my next door neighbour. Next door was a rooming house full of weird characters. My husband and I tried for ages to let it be known that the driveway was not a shared driveway, but one day a car was parked in front of mine so I couldn’t get out. I tried to move it round but got stuck, but then a man came out of the rooming house next door and punched me twice in the face through my open driver-side window. My husband came out and he was beaten up on his own front lawn before the police came” (interview, 8th March, 2001).

Outbursts of violence towards others, as Maura describes, were sporadic incidents and it would thus be a gross distortion to portray the deinstitutionalized as hostile and aggressive maniacs – indeed, it would be contributing to the massive burden of stigma which the mentally ill have to carry. However, sporadic incidents lead to fear in and outside the community, dividing it along social fault lines which can stir up latent sentiments such as nimbyism and intolerance.

Appalling housing conditions for South Parkdale’s poor were unquestionably a key concern of the time. Living conditions were so close to intolerable for many discharged patients that it was hardly surprising that their road to recovery could not even begin. One ex-patient, Pat Capponi, has written a devastating account of her time in a large boarding home on King Street in South Parkdale in the late 1970s (Capponi, 1992). Now one of Canada’s leading mental health care advocates, her experiences of living in a degrading environment of poverty, despair, fear and uncertainty whilst trying to get her life back on track after being hospitalised for acute depression are conveyed with poignant eloquence:

“Winter was creeping into the house, through every cracked window, through the rotting bricks and absent insulation, through the front doors that never closed properly. Few of the ancient radiators in the rooms coughed up heat; mostly they clanged and banged energetically but stayed icy cold to the touch. There were no extra blankets allocated, no warm clothing, no layers of socks to keep us from feeling numb inside and out.Snow drifting down from the sky was no occasion for joy; it

sealed us inside as it piled up, making the trek to the dining room wet, slippery and unpleasant.We grew used to the cold as the weeks passed, making do, always making do. The owner eventually had to turn the heat up or risk losing a few of the old people to the morgue. ...I stuffed newspapers under my door at night to keep out the draft from the hall.It seemed too cold in the house for the lice to survive, which meant the cloth couches could be used without too much worry. That was the only perceptible benefit of winter. People slept more than usual, dreading the cold floors, freezing toilet seats and, worse, the trek to the dining room. Depression was everywhere, and you could tell from people's faces that a number wondered whether they would survive the season" (Capponi, 1992, p.149-152).

Given these sorts of conditions, especially the lack of privacy and the shared facilities, it is hardly surprising that the bachelorettes which I described earlier became a sought-after housing option for the deinstitutionalized; Capponi herself left the boarding home for a bachelorette in 1981. It has been estimated that during the late 1970s over 200 properties in South Parkdale were illegally converted into bachelorettes (interview with Director, Parkdale Pilot Project, 20th June 2001), mainly by absentee investment firms and often rapacious landlords (or slumlords) who wanted to milk what they could from the people who needed rental housing in an otherwise undesirable neighbourhood. This large number of conversions reflects the massive demand from discharged psychiatric patients with a dearth of shelter choices.

These forms of housing, hardly conducive to the recovery of an ex-psychiatric patient attempting to cope outside the institution, quickly became a principal target of blame for the neighbourhood's decline. It was in the mid- to late 1970s that a small number of homeowners in South Parkdale began to complain about this proliferation of bachelorette buildings, not to mention their shabby appearance, the number of cars around them (which took up 'their' parking space), and the behaviour of the tenants who lived in them. Several interviewees revealed the social problems caused by bachelorettes which affected their lives:

"Yes, I would say the bachelorettes did contribute to more social problems. The long time residents that I grew to know were tolerant of the psychiatric patients in group homes and on the street. But they were horrified at the drinking and garbage that these ugly bachelorettes often incurred, which was very visible on the street. There is nothing healthy about crude poverty and garbage" (Karin, interview, 3rd April 2001).

Some respondents blamed the owners or managers of bachelorettes as the cause of social strife:

“The root of the problem wasn’t so much the tenants themselves, but the extremely rapacious bachelorette owners. I heard about one landlord who was told by the City to reduce the amount of units in his building from 15 to 12, but instead he wrote a letter saying ‘how can I get the number up to 18?’. It was this kind of behaviour, like reducing the living space available, which sucked the heart and soul out of the low-income schizophrenics who had to live in these places. I mean when you live in conditions like they have to endure, there’s no way you’re going to be a normal person again. If daily life was like that, you’re going to start drinking or taking crack or God knows what else, or just give up on life completely. When I lived in Parkdale, if you didn’t agree 100% with the people who were pro-bachelorette, then you were blamed as anti-poor and not sympathetic to the plight of people who had nowhere else to go. But if you saw one of these places then your opinion changed – they were just awful and no place for anyone to live, and you couldn’t help thinking that something had to be done” (Lenny, interview, 10th April 2001).

In 1978, the response of the former City of Toronto to the homeowners was to impose a ban on all new bachelorette conversions and new rooming house construction, create new regulations for safety, unit size, and number of units in each building, appoint a bachelorette ‘clean-up team’ to prosecute owners and landlords who didn’t comply with health and safety regulations, and close down those buildings which didn’t comply (CTUDS, 1997). However, despite some legalisations, closures and evictions, illegal conversions of buildings continued following unprecedented demand in the 1980s, not just from the deinstitutionalized but from the increasing influx of low-income immigrants into the neighbourhood I outlined earlier. Owners were reluctant to reduce the number of units in their buildings, and relocating tenants became almost impossible as apartment vacancy rates tumbled citywide. Figure 5 shows the outcome (by 1997) – a high density of rooming houses and bachelorette buildings to the south of Queen Street, in contrast to the more sporadic distribution to the north.

South Parkdale was, in sum, heavily traumatised by the municipal government’s post-war urban restructuring, and provincial government’s execrable approach to mental health care. It became known as a ‘problem neighbourhood’ in Toronto, a major embarrassment to the municipal government. The neighbourhood was

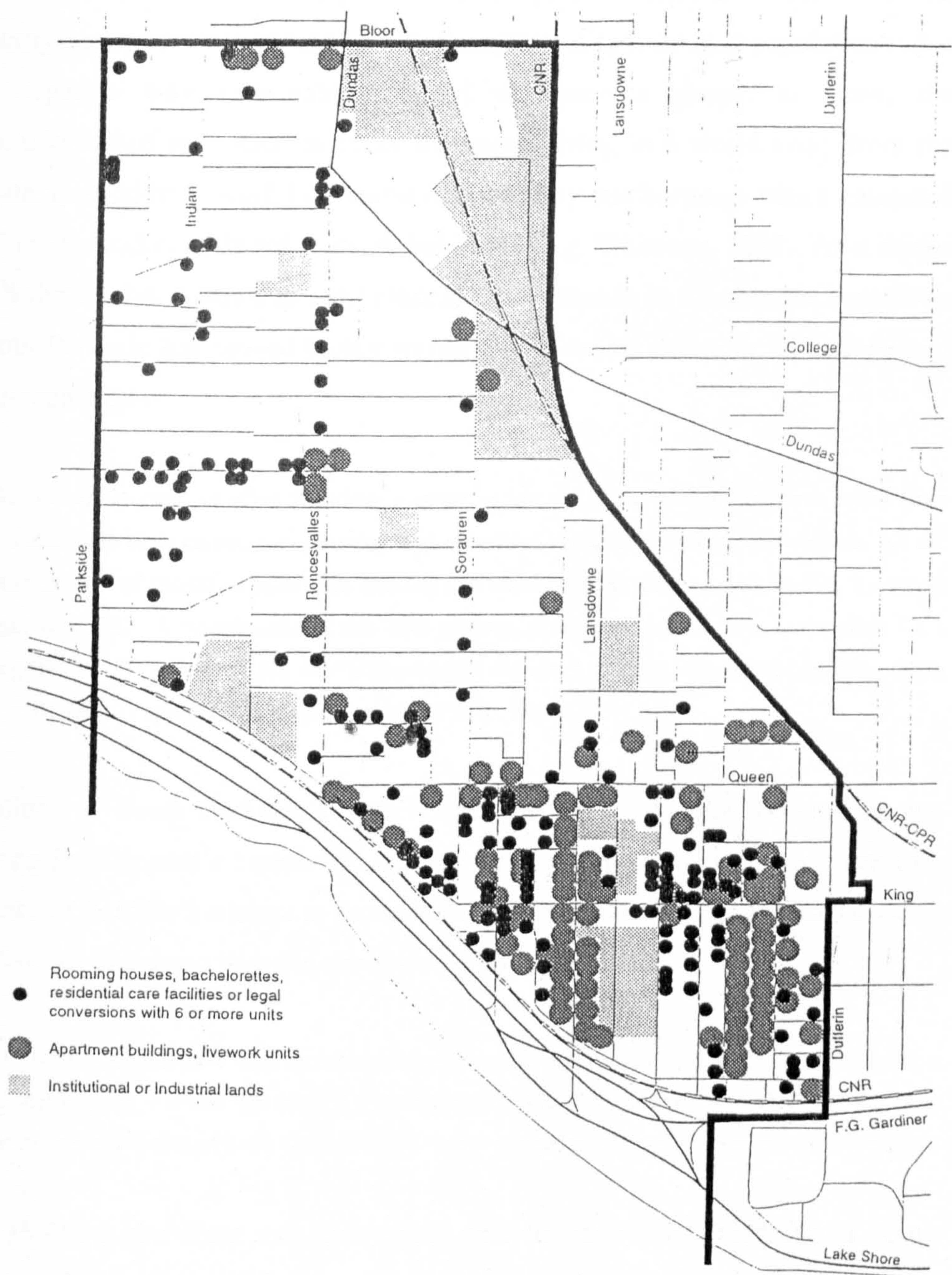


Figure 5 - The concentration of rooming houses in South Parkdale, 1997.
(Source: CTUDS, 1997).

deteriorating at a time when Toronto was being heralded by the foreign media as “The Canadian City That Works”, in contrast to American cities such as Detroit that “didn’t work” (Croucher, 1997, p.324-6). Locally, a powerful discourse of decline and decay emerged which cloaked South Parkdale’s disadvantaged population in the most negative way imaginable. Instead of seen as people in need, the deinstitutionalized were seen as crazy transients, living in a world away from the alternate, even more powerful discourse of liveability and harmony which emanated from Toronto and contributed to its global image (e.g. Whiteson, 1982). As it stands in such remarkable contrast to most other neighbourhoods in the city, the reputation of South Parkdale has proved highly resilient, as a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* demonstrates:

“Temple Avenue is pure, distilled Parkdale, a street of big old brick houses that have faded from glory. Some have been carved into rooming houses, others muddled by cheap renovations. All are cast in the shadow of run-down apartment buildings on nearby streets that stand like walls, fracturing the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood rife with poverty, drugs, and prostitution, ...no place for a child to grow up. Broken glass and wild screaming on the street at night. Prostitutes strolling down the sidewalk. Drunks splayed on the grass asleep” (Philip, 2000).

The plight of South Parkdale’s ‘psychiatric survivors’, as they became known following Pat Capponi’s tireless efforts, was largely forgotten. They were seen as a hindrance to Toronto’s attempt to promote itself as a multicultural, progressive world city. Contrast this quote with the one above:

“[Toronto is] a mulligan stew with an international blend of ingredients – a touch of this culture, a pinch of that custom – which has created a spectacular mixture of sight and sound, color and style along the once-staid shores of Lake Ontario” (U.S. travel magazine, quoted in Croucher, 1997, p.326).

In the 1980s, a new force was to encroach into the distressed landscape of South Parkdale, a force which had been widespread in central Toronto since the emergence of the ‘reform movement’ of the 1970s (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996a; Kipfer and Keil, 2000). It is still happening as I write, and has added a new set of tensions to an already tense district. Gentrification has become the next major process to restructure the social geographies of the neighbourhood.

4.3 South Parkdale 1982-present: gentrification, ‘psychiatric survivors’, and ‘social tectonics’

“‘Parkdale Village’. What a dream. A lot of people will have to be magically transformed, or magically transported, before the Parkdale Village dream can come true” (Geoff Bowie, director and narrator of “Zero Tolerance: a documentary about a neighbourhood in conflict”, 1993).

4.3.1 Gentrification?

In Chapter 2 I provided a brief account of the work of Jon Caulfield and David Ley, both of whom have contributed much to our understanding of the historical foundations and process of gentrification in Toronto. There is thus no need for repetition here, rather a very brief summary of the changing nature of gentrification in Toronto, a process now so firmly established on the ground that it is hard to find a neighbourhood in its downtown core that has not experienced either wholesale or sporadic gentrification.

It took a while for the British term ‘gentrification’ to enter the lexicon of Toronto life – the term ‘whitepainting’ was preferred when the process first emerged in the mid-1960s, and was a reference to the gentrifiers’ penchant for painting the exterior of their house white (Dynes, 1974; Aitkenhead et al, 1975; Rebizant et al, 1976). Labelled also with uncritical, socially innocent terms such as ‘townhousing’ and ‘sandblasting’, gentrification was taking place only in a select few neighbourhoods at the time, famously in Don Vale (Cabbagetown) (Dynes, 1974; Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996a). The process accelerated in the 1970s during the ‘reform era’ described in Chapter 2, when a large-scale ‘back-to-the-city’ ideology became ingrained in the marginal middle-class, counter-cultural imagination, when neighbourhoods such as Yorkville and The Annex became hotbeds of ‘hippie’ reaction against political conservatism and suburban ideologies (Ley, 1996a). During the 1980s, many downtown neighbourhoods saw their social and economic status elevate as the central city became the perceived arena for cultural awareness, tolerance and emancipation – all in the context of a laissez-faire state, a changing industrial and occupational structure (where ‘hippies became yuppies’, as Ley put it), a real estate boom, the advent of postmodern niche-marketing and conspicuous consumption, and Toronto’s emergence as a second-tier world city (Ley, 1986; Kary, 1988; Caulfield,

1989). Following the stock-market crash of 1987 and the subsequent recession, gentrification in Toronto did not slowdown to the extent that occurred in major American and British cities, mainly because the process was less developed and still included members of the 'marginal' middle-class (Rose, 1989, 1996; Ley, 1992; Caulfield, 1994).

Since the mid-1990s, however, gentrification has been particularly intense, with real-estate prices in gentrified neighbourhoods such as Cabbagetown, The Beaches, The Annex and Riverdale suggesting 'super-gentrification' (Lees, 2000), and also the horizontal expansion of the process across the urban core. This has been particularly noticeable in areas where gentrification is still associated with the arts and culture industries, such as along Queen Street where 1980s gentrification is now spreading east and west (Ley, 2002). It is also possible to see the maturation of gentrification in ethnic enclaves such as Greektown (Danforth Avenue), Little Italy/Little Portugal (College Street) and Little Poland (Roncesvalles Avenue) – all very much associated with another, even more intense real estate boom and also the state-led marketing of 'multiculturalism' to encourage reinvestment in these enclaves (Croucher, 1997). Furthermore, abandoned warehouses and factories in districts such as King/Spadina, Liberty, Leslieville (Queen Street East) and King/Parliament have been converted into luxury apartments and extensively marketed as chic 'loft-living' (Klein, 1998; Gratz and Mintz, 1998), romanticising the far-from-romantic industrial usage of old and encouraging young professionals to buy into history in a manner not dissimilar to Zukin's (1982) pioneering work on culture and capital in urban change (see Podmore, 1998, for the Canadian context). During this post-recession era, gentrification in South Parkdale, whilst not at all rampant or wholesale, has picked up pace, something which in recent memory (and recent scholarship) was difficult to imagine.

Over a decade ago, an important essay by Pierre Filion (1991) attempted to "account for the impact of gentrification on society" (p.555), using Toronto as a case study. His wide-ranging assessment of Toronto's gentrification meant that he did not focus on one specific neighbourhood, but his comments on [South] Parkdale were striking and warrant attention:

“Parkdale provides the sharpest illustration of a declining Toronto inner-city neighbourhood. While deconversion was proceeding apace in east Toronto neighbourhoods such as Riverdale and Cabbagetown, Parkdale.....was experiencing ongoing conversion. This conversion led to the multiplication of small studio apartments known locally as ‘bachelorettes’. One effect of gentrification is to further restrict lower income households’ already limited range of residential options.... This limitation of choices leads precisely to the emergence of ‘refuge’ neighbourhoods such as Parkdale. Gentrification causes low income households increasingly to trade off central location for reproduction conditions, or to endure reproduction conditions in such locations because of a lack of affordable alternatives elsewhere. In Parkdale, for example, residents must make do with small apartments, high traffic levels, a dearth of green spaces and difficulties in reaching the close-by lakefront because of a surface expressway” (p.561).

If we are to follow Filion’s characterization, it was rampant gentrification in other Toronto neighbourhoods that was contributing towards South Parkdale’s decline, and quite the opposite of gentrification was taking place there in the late 1980s and early ‘90s. In other studies of Toronto’s gentrification (e.g. Kary, 1988; Caulfield, 1989, 1994; Ley, 1996a) no mention of South Parkdale exists other than in reference to its decline and decay. In the 1970s, amidst the backdrop of counter-cultural reform politics and anti-modernist propaganda, South Parkdale served as an example of all that was wrong with modernist growth boosterism and renewal. Middle-class observers and reform politicians would only have to demonstrate the brutal effects of the Gardiner Expressway on South Parkdale to further their cause - that a reorientation of urban growth from the suburbs back towards the preservation and celebration of the central city would revive Toronto. Perhaps the South Parkdale example was to some extent responsible for an activism trend sweeping Canada in the 1970s and ‘80s, where “[l]arge-scale public and private redevelopment projects and infrastructure (notably urban freeway) proposals were resisted in city after city” (Hasson and Ley, 1994, p.26); the most famous of these being Jane Jacobs’s successful challenge to the proposed Spadina Expressway through her neighbourhood, The Annex.

Further evidence of South Parkdale’s sorry status in the wider context of a gentrifying Toronto is offered by Ley (1996b), who recorded the geography of ‘social status change’ in six Canadian cities between 1971 and 1991 using occupational and educational variables (see also Ley, 1992). For Toronto, the

districts exhibiting 'upgrading' were the most celebrated examples of gentrification, such as Yorkville, Don Vale (Cabbagetown) and Riverdale. At the other end of the scale, Ley noted that

"[a]side from concentrations of public housing like Regent Park or austere apartment areas, notably St. Jamestown, the districts of limited upgrading, and in some cases downgrading, are on the edges of the inner city, *particularly in the outer west end*" (1996b, p.19, emphasis added).

Both the form of measurement and the time-scale adopted by Ley are, however, important factors in his assessment. Broad statistical calculations do not reveal exceptions to the rule, as some of the areas of limited upgrading and downgrading doubtless experienced some small scale gentrification during these two decades, and it is crucial that the 1991 census was the cut-off point. As we shall see through *qualitative* evidence, the gentrification of South Parkdale, following brief stints in the 1980s, took off in the 1990s, especially towards the end of the decade up to the present time. Ley's observations of the economic malaise of the 'outer west end', however, do chime with some descriptive data I compiled from the 1981, 1986, 1991 and 1996 censuses²², taken from the four census tracts of South Parkdale (004, 005, 007.01, 007.02). For the time being, a look at some interesting indicators of social status provides very little quantitative evidence of gentrification. Table 5 shows that in 1996, the unemployment rate was nearly *double* that of the City of Toronto average, 17.3% versus 9.1%, and Table 6 shows that the average household income was *half* that of the City average, a mere \$34,004 compared to \$68,521. These comparisons, however, have remained fairly constant since 1986, perhaps hinting that the neighbourhood has not been on the severe decline portrayed in numerous representations of South Parkdale.

²² It is frustrating that the relevant data from 2001 census of population will not be released until May 2003, as I am convinced that some important transformations to the neighbourhood from 1996-2001 could be demonstrated.

Table 5: Unemployment rate, South Parkdale, 1981-1996. Source: Statistics Canada
Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Year	South Parkdale	City of Toronto
1981	6.1%	4.0%
1986	10.0%	5.5%
1991	15.9%	8.5%
1996	17.3%	9.1%

Table 6: Average household income, South Parkdale, 1981-1996. Source: Statistics
Canada Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Year	South Parkdale	City of Toronto
1981	\$15638	\$28765
1986	\$22267	\$43025
1991	\$31977	\$59450
1996	\$34004	\$68251

Educational attainment (Table 7) shows South Parkdale to be improving since 1981, but lapsing relative to the performance of Toronto in terms of the percentage of people with university degrees.

Table 7: Educational attainment, persons 15 years old and over, South Parkdale 1981-1996. Source: Statistics Canada Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Less than Grade 9 University Degree		
South Parkdale		
1981	16.6%	11.2%
1986	16.4%	11.7%
1991	12.9%	13.0%
1996	11.3%	15.6%
City of Toronto		
1981	16.2%	11.6%
1986	13.8%	13.8%
1991	11.3%	16.6%
1996	10.3%	19.0%

The types of employment in Toronto (Table 8) follow the trends which have been taking place in most advanced Western societies since the 1980s – a continual decline of manufacturing employment, and a significant rise in FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) and service sector employment (Murdie, 1996, p.210). In South Parkdale, however, whilst the percentage of people employed in the service sector rose significantly from 1981-1996, there was a gradual *decline* in FIRE sector employment (Table 9). This is interesting and does not suggest a rise in social status – the highest levels in job growth were in industries which pay the least wages, and there has been a neighbourhood-level decline in the number of people employed in the industries that pay the most wages.

Table 8: Employment by sector, City of Toronto, 1981-1996. Source: Statistics Canada Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Employment Sector	1981	1986	1991	1996
Primary Industries	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	0.7%
Manufacturing	24.0%	22.7%	17.5%	15.5%
Construction	5.5%	5.5%	6.3%	4.5%
Transportation/Communication/Other Utilities	8.0%	7.4%	7.4%	6.8%
Trade	18.2%	18.2%	17.7%	16.9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE)	8.5%	8.5%	9.2%	15.7%
Community, Business and Personal Services	29.8%	31.8%	35.3%	36.4%
Public Administration/Government	5.2%	4.8%	5.5%	3.5%

Table 9: Employment by sector, South Parkdale, 1981-1996. Source: Statistics Canada Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Employment Sector	1981	1986	1991	1996
Primary Industries	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Manufacturing	24.4%	25.1%	18.8%	18.6%
Construction	3.7%	3.6%	5.0%	3.1%
Transportation/Communication/Other Utilities	8.0%	6.2%	6.4%	6.1%
Trade	14.2%	12.4%	12.9%	13.9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE)	10.2%	8.2%	9.9%	8.9%
Community, Business and Personal Services	33.5%	40.5%	42.4%	46.0%
Public Administration/Government	5.7%	3.9%	4.5%	3.0%

Similar suggestions can be derived from a look at the rise in single-person households from 1991-1996 (Table 10), for the absence of families is often a sign of an economically traumatised neighbourhood (Sommers, 1998). Since 1981, South Parkdale has consistently featured over double the Toronto average of single-person

households, and a 3.4 percentage increase from 1991-1996; suggesting that the residential conversion Filion (1991) demonstrated continued in the early 1990s.

Table 10 - Single-person households as a percentage of all households, South Parkdale, 1981-1996. Source: Statistics Canada Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

	1981	1986	1991	1996
South Parkdale	48.4%	44.2%	43.6%	45.1%
City of Toronto	21.7%	21.4%	21.8%	21.9%

A recent study undertaken by the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT, 2002) ranked the 12 postal code districts of Toronto with the highest rates of poverty, and code M6K, a large district which includes all of South Parkdale, featured the fifth highest rate, with 34.7% of the population living in poverty – an increase of 2.4% since 1995 (p.23). While this data needs to be compared with the as yet unreleased census of 2001, it does indicate that South Parkdale’s economic woes have not been disappearing.

Statistical assessment, then, would make the reader wonder why I have chosen to study gentrification in South Parkdale! Nothing in earlier studies or in the descriptive statistics above suggests an upward neighbourhood trajectory – in fact, the data suggest a trend verging on the opposite. The United Way study points to an interesting and alarming trend occurring in Toronto – income segregation by neighbourhood - which might account for these data:

“There are many factors that are seen to be contributing to growing income segregation of neighbourhoods in Toronto. These include the government’s withdrawal from the development of assisted housing in the mid-1990s, rising rents and historically low vacancy rates, the removal of rent controls, the loss of existing rental stock, and the almost exclusive development of condominiums since the mid-1990s. *All of these changes are thought to be pushing low-income people into the Toronto neighbourhoods with the lowest-cost housing*” (UWGT, 2002, p.22, my emphasis).

Some of these issues relative to the South Parkdale context will be explored later, but it is worth mentioning that popular and academic representations often tend to explain that the poorest neighbourhoods are 'left behind' as other neighbourhoods retain or improve their economic condition; polarisation rather than convergence seems to be the trend in post-industrial Toronto (Murdie, 1996) – indeed, this is a hallmark of advanced capitalist cities (e.g. Sassen, 1991; O'Loughlin and Friedrichs, 1996; Abu-Lughod, 1999). However, relying solely on statistical evidence to explain gentrification is fraught with problems. Such an approach often obscures the subtle, small-scale changes which may be occurring on individual streets, even blocks; furthermore, numerical analyses often shroud the detail and implementation of specific policy initiatives which may be driving these changes. These will now become the focus of the rest of this chapter.

4.3.2 Reinvestment: neighbourhood attributes and artists

Given the above data and the powerful discourse of decline and decay which has enveloped it for decades, it might seem remarkable that South Parkdale has experienced any gentrification at all. How, then, did a neighbourhood that was often the subject of middle-class derision and fear attract gentrifiers? A closer consideration of some of its characteristics reveals why it has experienced some slow yet continuing middle-class resettlement since the mid-1980s, with a quickening of paces since the mid-1990s. Discussing the attributes of gentrifying neighbourhoods in Canadian cities, Ley (1996a) has contended that

“low-income areas will be entered [by the middle-class] if they hold some specific asset such as affordability, a distinctive housing stock, a particular life-style ambience, or proximity to downtown and its varied services” (p.104).

One newspaper article (to which I referred in Chapter 3) crystallised a few of these attributes in the South Parkdale context:

“And what does the future hold for Parkdale? Some think that it may be the next Cabbagetown²³. That its Victorian architecture and growing stock of renovated houses make it a prime candidate for gentrification.....property prices are rising. The sight of an elegant reno next to a rundown rooming house is increasingly common. ‘The prostitution and drug dealers certainly exist. You can’t get away from that. They’re part of the landscape,’ says....a real estate agent in the neighbourhood. But, she says, artists are moving in, antique dealers have set up shop, and the neighbourhood is showing signs of change. ‘The architecture down there is some of the best in the city. A greater degree of people are wanting to be down there. A lot of people are changing their tune about Parkdale’” (Philip, 2000).

A letter to *The Globe and Mail*, in response to some of the negative imagery of the neighbourhood in the same article, is indicative of the recent demographic and social transformations to the landscape:

“I know that many of my neighbours, who happen to be lawyers, stockbrokers, computer programmers, artists, filmmakers, restaurateurs, store proprietors and employees of *The Globe and Mail*, have no intention of leaving Parkdale. On the contrary, they have flocked to the neighbourhood in recent years, seeking the opportunity to live, work and invest in a prototypical modern urban community” (Letter to *The Globe and Mail*, August 7th 2000).

The following excerpts from two separate interviews with gentrifiers support this claim of the middle-classes ‘changing their tune’ about South Parkdale:

“We moved here because of the location. It is really easy to get into Downtown if you work in the city, like twenty minutes on the streetcar, and as my husband often goes to Niagara on business, he can get right on the Expressway in about two minutes. The houses here are so beautiful, and affordable, which was a big reason for us because everywhere else was so expensive. Plus, they’re Victorian, and large, and you just can’t find this type of housing anymore without paying a fortune for it. You get way more space for the price in this neighbourhood, and our friends who stop by just can’t believe how little we paid for this place. Yes the crime is a concern and yes it is a rougher neighbourhood than many others but the benefits far outweigh those burdens” (Kathryn, interview, 29th January 2001).

“I guess I liked the architecture, the wide, tree-lined streets, the easy access to Downtown and the park [High Park, Toronto’s largest public park], and above all, because people were bothered by what they saw on the streets, it was incredibly cheap. I had always wanted a Victorian home and this was

²³ Cabbagetown (or Don Vale), Toronto’s most famous example of gentrification, once a solidly working class Irish neighbourhood, is now an elite neighbourhood full of high-income professionals (Kary, 1988).

the only neighbourhood left where they were affordable. As I am an interior designer and the place needed a lot of work, it was ideal for me to experiment with my ideas. When you settle here, you wonder what all the fuss is about, really. It's a great place to live and not as pretentious as some other neighbourhoods" (Paul, interview, 17th February 2001).

These anecdotes connect without hesitation to Ley's (1996a) assertion that

"in the Canadian inner cities, a distinctive period architecture is a common feature of the gentrifying inner neighbourhood. Architectural signatures including Victorian brick, gables and gingerbread, and Edwardian bays and turrets are among the styles that are painstakingly restored as part of the *habitus* of an urbane life-style" (p.105).

Other interviewees showed that the article in *The Globe and Mail* was correct about the equivalence often drawn with Cabbagetown:

"I ran into a lady, a friend of a friend, in the hardware store out on Queen Street. I thought she still lived in the Annex, and I said 'Hey, what are you doing in this neighbourhood?' and she said 'Oh, I live here now.' I said 'Why did you move?', and she goes 'Didn't you hear? Parkdale's going to be the new Cabbagetown!'" (Laurie, interview, 7th April 2001).

"First and foremost we moved here because we couldn't find any other neighbourhoods where you could snap up a solid Victorian house for such a cheap price. It's kind of like how Cabbagetown was in the 1960s – working-class, a kind of 'down' feel about it, but loads of really nice houses with great potential. The value of our house has nearly doubled in the 7 years we have lived here, for two reasons. First, we put a lot of money into making it look great again, and second, more people are discovering that this might be 'Cabbagetown the sequel', so prices have gone up" (Sarah, interview, 16th March 2001).

Tying this qualitative evidence together, one can speculate that it was the appalling reputation of South Parkdale which kept property values down, and this was a major factor in the gradual resettlement of parts of the neighbourhood by the middle-classes. As house prices rose elsewhere in the city during the mid- to late 1980s real estate boom, a growing segment of professional middle-classes who favoured 'old city' places (Caulfield, 1994) with easy access to employment in downtown Toronto found a handsome, spacious and *affordable* Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage on South Parkdale's broad, tree lined streets.

Talk of more recent gentrification switches attention to South Parkdale's growing reputation for housing artists and their patrons. Much has been written about the role of artists in either initiating or facilitating gentrification (e.g. Zukin, 1982; Smith, 1996; Podmore, 1998; Solnit and Schwartzberg 2000; Mele, 2000a; Ley, 2002). Often portrayed in the media as 'pioneers' crossing a 'frontier' where a 'wild' neighbourhood is then 'tamed' by a trendy, counter-cultural, hip new class of resident (see Smith, 1996, p.12-29, for a penetrating critique of these metaphors), artists have been shown to prime entire neighbourhoods for the real estate industry – the first group who set up opportunities for further reinvestment and profit. Solnit and Schwartzberg (2000) describe succinctly the disquiet surrounding artists in academic studies of gentrification:

"In discussions about gentrification....artists are a controversial subject – sometimes because the focus on the displacement of artists eclipses the displacement of the less privileged in general, sometimes because artists have played roles in promoting gentrification as well as resisting it, sometimes because artists and their ilk are conceived of as middle-class people slumming and playing poor" (p.19-20).

Toronto has not escaped the impact of artists, nor the celebratory media imagery which accompanies artists in the inner-city:

"There's no better sign of urban health than the relationship between a city and its artists. Inevitably, cities with vibrant art communities are also successful economically, socially and politically. The connection is complex, but direct. A good example of this symbiosis can be seen in the role artists play as urban pioneers, colonizing neglected and rundown areas of the city and quickly making them irresistible to the forces of gentrification" (Hume, 2001).

The 'neglected and rundown' (though by no means undiscovered) South Parkdale is bordered to the north by the vital artery of Queen Street West. From the stabilised core of Spadina Avenue, the westward movement of gentrification throughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s along this street²⁴ towards South Parkdale can be detected in the mushrooming of artists' studios and galleries, trendy cafes, clothes shops and restaurants, live/work spaces, and more recently, the explosion of loft-living in

²⁴ See Ley (1996a): "Along the Queen Street West axis, social change is associated with the arts and cultural scene" (p.94).

converted warehouses (Plate 7). A recent article in a widely-read magazine labelled the section of Queen Street West just to the east of South Parkdale as 'Canada's Coolest Neighbourhood', and justified this choice by saying that

"[e]very cool neighbourhood follows much the same narrative of rise, decline and rise again. There's no such thing as a newly built cool neighbourhood: a certain history is essential. Typically, it enjoys prosperity early in its life, then falls from fashion. Low rents then open it up to artists, students and proprietors of risky and marginal businesses. These groups end up unconsciously playing the role of town planners, shaping their neighbourhood first by moving in, then by shopping here and not there, then by improving their property" (Fulford, 2002).

For many who know the area, the South Parkdale section of Queen Street (from Dufferin Street to Roncesvalles Avenue, Plate 8) represents the last stage in making Queen Street 'cool' – the 'final frontier' of Queen Street's artistic and cultural (and social) transformation. While reinvestment along the South Parkdale section has been somewhat pedestrian compared to the rapid gentrification of areas to the east in earlier decades, in the last few years signs of upgrading can be observed, such as in the appearance of small independent art galleries, a few bohemian cafés with names like 'Nine of Cups' and 'Rustic Cosmo Café', and particularly the presence of 1313 Queen Street, an old art-deco police station which has become 'Gallery 1313' (<http://www.g1313.org>), the live/work headquarters of the Parkdale Village Arts Collective (PVAC). The PVAC was formed in 1994 under the auspices of the federally funded Parkdale Village BIA (Business Improvement Association) with the objective of 'promoting the arts community' in the neighbourhood – hardly surprising given the BIA's mission 'to revitalize the Village of Parkdale'. It regularly houses exhibitions of contemporary art and has become something of a centrepiece for the large community of artists in the west-end of Toronto – and, more significantly, it has served to attract their middle-class patrons (cf. Ley, 2002). It is interesting that one of the BIA's main strategies has been a re-designation of the neighbourhood as 'Parkdale Village, 1879' on many of the streetposts (Plate 9), surely an effort to put South Parkdale on the cultural map and encourage the middle-classes to buy into the rich architectural, social and cultural heritage of the neighbourhood. Affection for 'old-city places' is a defining feature of the post-1970s Toronto gentry (Caulfield, 1989, 1994), and the BIA has picked up on this affection in its attempts to set South Parkdale on an about-turn in its economic well-being.

By the mid- to late-1990s, the community of artists in South Parkdale began to expand following their displacement from the Liberty district adjacent to the neighbourhood. This formerly industrial area saw an influx of artists in the 1970s as manufacturing relocated to suburban locations. Empty warehouses, some of them vast and architecturally significant, were the (often illegal) dwellings of a generation of Toronto artists engaged in a live/work culture. The dot-com explosion of the mid-1990s, however, transformed the area into a 'new media' hub, as the area provided office space that was both cheap and attractive – artists, having made the neighbourhood 'trendy', ended up being victims of their own success as they did not have the financial means to compete with new industries for the space; an outcome which has been demonstrated in other accounts of artists and gentrification (e.g. Zukin, 1982; Anderson, 1990; Solnit and Schwartzberg, 2000; Ley, 2002). The computer programmers have since been joined by graphic design companies, architectural studios, marketing agencies and printing houses – the “hard-working and nice-earning influx of new businesses and educated labour” highlighted by the quotation which began this chapter (Pugh, 2001). Consequently, in what has been renamed 'Liberty Village', “hundreds of artists have lost their studios in the last two or three years” (Hume, 2001) and many of them have set up their operations in neighbouring South Parkdale where rents are affordable, and where a community of artists is already in place to welcome their arrival. In addition, artists spoke of the 'edginess' of environs which serves to amplify their cutting-edge art:

“Oh man, we've been lucky! What has been happening in the last few years is that all the other places where artists have their studios have become too expensive for the whole live/work thing you're hearing about. Parkdale's a blessing for us – not only was it relatively cheap to 'set up shop', so to speak, but it also had the kind of social scene that we look for. You'll never find contemporary, young artists in places like Rosedale or the suburbs because they are monotonous, stuffy and let's face it, they're just boring. Parkdale was the opposite – it is a BIG reality check for anyone who comes here. People live right on the edge, giving the whole place a kind of edgy feel, which offers ideas and a sort of niche for expression in art. You're never going to find that kind of thing in financial districts or neighbourhoods with loads of families. ..It's the same the world over – I was reading this book the other day, all about lofts and artists, and all these lofts in places like Barcelona, Paris, San Francisco are in pretty run-down areas. Artists go there because they're cheap and they're right on the edge of society” (Sal, interview, 27th June 2001).

Applications to redress zoning restrictions in favour of live/work environments are thus appearing all over the neighbourhood (Plate 10) as the devalorised spaces of postwar South Parkdale are put on the path to revalorisation. It is now casually estimated (by the interviewee above) that over six hundred artists now live in the neighbourhood, gradually grinding away at the long-time and hardly aesthetically appealing status quo of Queen Street. Artists have the complete, uncritical support of the City, as was revealed to me by the City Councillor for the administrative ward which contains South Parkdale. He told me that the status quo of Queen Street is

“a legacy of hard times in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, but it’s improving. We’ve been working hard with the Parkdale/Liberty BIA to get little pockets of businesses into Queen Street so that other businesses will follow. Things are improving with the influx of the art galleries. This is the way we need to go, we need to open up the street to that sort of business. I was instrumental in that because I was on the board that helped to legalise live/work spaces for artists who were living in poor conditions. So with Queen Street what is needed are speciality stores that will serve people in the neighbourhood and attract people from beyond it. It’s not great at the moment, but it’s getting there. We do need more pride from businesses on Queen Street, like cleaning up windows, storefronts, signs, that kind of thing” (City Councillor for Ward 14, interview, 2nd April 2001).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Queen Street was the site of some of the most open drug dealing and prostitution in the metropolis, and was the subject of a documentary made by two independent filmmakers (Bowie and Valier, 1993) on the tensions between middle-class homeowners who wanted to “rid the neighbourhood of this kind of criminal activity” and the destitute, often mentally ill working-class residents who had few other means of making ends meet than to resort to such criminal activity. It is noticeable how quickly things have changed since this documentary was made; as a resident memorably put it to me when we stopped outside an independent art gallery during a walk along the street:

“Look at this place! It doesn’t even have a name, they’re trying to be so hip! I think this used to be a little electronics store, run by this Korean guy. Every time I walk down here something changes, and it’s totally because the artsy-fartsy crowd are on their way, man” (Jesse, interview, July 7th 2001).

A study undertaken by the City of Toronto in 1997 (CTUDS, 1997) noted that “much of the negative images of this area can be related back to the condition and

use of this street” and eradicated any doubt over the links between artists and revitalization in this context by suggesting that “street banners [should] be hung as a means to advertise it as an artists’ district” (p.18).

4.3.3 “Municipally managed gentrification”

It should be clear by now that something had to happen to improve the conditions of South Parkdale, especially the living conditions for many of its poorer residents, and my conversations with residents of different backgrounds who were intimately familiar with the neighbourhood provided further evidence that the neighbourhood had suffered enough. While I have no intention of even implying that gentrification was or is the remedy, it struck me that some form of humane, inclusive ‘improvement’ was (and in many ways still is) essential when listening to comments about the neighbourhood in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s:

“When my friend told me her roommate was moving out, and offered me the room, she said ‘it’s a great place, but it’s in Parkdale’. I thought, well, it’s so cheap, I’ll just take it and remember not to go to the store late at night on my own. The fact that there were seven locks on the back door when I moved in told me a little about what kind of neighbourhood this was. There were lots of strange characters in the neighbourhood, many of them mentally ill, who might have done me harm. They never did, but without the medical care they needed I’m sure it was possible and that was a worrying situation for a woman walking alone in the neighbourhood” (Laura, interview, 27th March 2001).

“Virtually everyone I knew warned us against moving here. People said it was a really bad area, full of hookers, drug addicts, shootings, drunks, that kind of thing. One friend of mine said ‘Parkdale? You’ll be in Regent Park²⁵ next!’”.

TS: “Was that reputation valid after you moved in? Was it as bad as you had been warned?”

“Well, not quite, but it was definitely unsafe for me to walk alone at night. It was never as bad as shootings or murders, but the crack cocaine problem was pretty bad in the early 90s, and aggressive behaviour can accompany addiction problems, so it was a little worrying. And it was kind of tough on the morale of people here to see open drug dealing and prostitution every night; it’s a sad reflection of our society that people had ended up in that state, with no-one trying to help them. There was nothing romantic or edgy about it – it was just plain sad” (Lucy, interview, 16th June 2001).

²⁵ Regent Park is a large housing project to the east of Downtown, perhaps Toronto’s most notorious (and most misunderstood) neighbourhood.

Commenting on the current character of the neighbourhood, some residents made it clear that recent gentrification has not led to much improvement for South Parkdale's disadvantaged population. As the following quotations show, they were less concerned about their personal safety in the neighbourhood, and more saddened or angry about what they encountered locally on a daily basis:

"Whenever I walk along Queen [Street] I do notice one thing above all – just a high percentage of sad and lonely people, people you would never see such concentrations of anywhere else in Toronto. You've got the homeless, the drunk, the mentally ill, and sometimes it can be quite overwhelming, just the general despair of the people who hang out on the streets" (Anne, interview, 9th April 2001).

"I think one thing that really bothers you is seeing people in really bad shape on the street, because you think there should be policies here that are helping these people in a better way than they are being helped. They smell of piss, they look like a wreck, have bare feet in the winter and stuff like that and you think 'what's going on?'. Life is so fucking hard for so many people here, and it really gets to me that it never seems to improve because the neighbourhood has become so misunderstood. Nobody seems to give a shit about Parkdale's poor, and that's been the case since the 1950s" (Chris, interview, 15th February 2001).

This resident is clearly onto something; most instances in the last few decades when the City of Toronto has seriously addressed the housing problems facing South Parkdale's low-income tenants have been when middle-class homeowners have complained about the intrusions into their lives, and negative effects on their property values, of the rooming houses and bachelorettes in the neighbourhood. Rarely have the tenant advocacy groups and 'psychiatric survivor' organisers had much impact in directing the attention of the municipal government towards the plight of the neighbourhood's poorer residents, who have to endure the often heinous living conditions in such properties (Pat Capponi's efforts were an exception to the norm). As I discussed earlier in this chapter, homeowner pressure on the City in the late 1970s led to the creation of a bachelorette 'clean-up team' in the early 1980s, appointed to clamp down on illegal conversions and unsafe dwellings, but this strategy collapsed through mismanagement and the futility of reducing the number of housing units at the high-water mark period of deinstitutionalization. The bachelorette and rooming house sub-market thus continued apace throughout the

1980s, forming a vital yet often unsafe and unsuitable resource for people with nowhere else to go.

In 1984, a report on income change produced by the City of Toronto made the following prediction:

“renovation activity is continuing throughout east end neighbourhoods and *may develop momentum in some west end neighbourhoods*. Therefore, further displacement of low-income households may be expected as the trend towards a more middle-income character continues in Toronto” (City of Toronto, 1984, ‘Toronto Region Incomes’, p.12. Quoted in Ley, 1996a, p.65, emphasis added.).

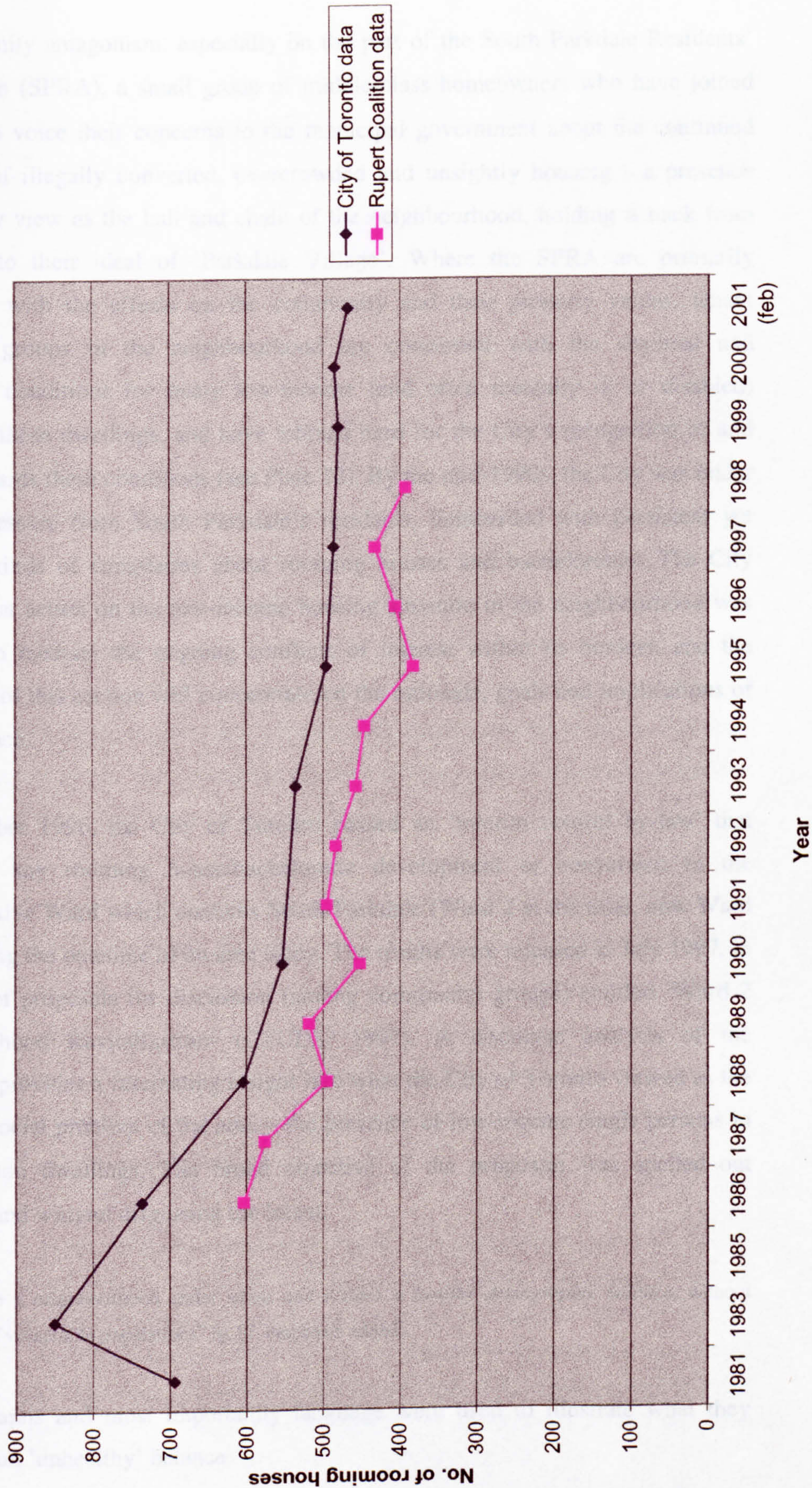
Low-income households in Toronto are often contained within rooming houses and bachelorettes - the cheapest forms of permanent accommodation currently available in the city, and the bottom rung of the housing ladder before shelters and the street; thus a crucial resource for Toronto’s low-income population. The intense gentrification of many Toronto neighbourhoods during the 1970s and ‘80s, whilst often celebrated as a progressive, Jane Jacobs-like challenge to modernist ideology (Caulfield, 1994), came at a high price for the city’s low income population as deconversion and renovation of rooming houses through gentrification removed several thousand affordable units from the housing stock. The consequences of the displacement of rooming house tenants, or ‘roomers’ as they are known, are extremely serious, and a number of researchers have linked the decline in rooming house provision to the explosive growth in homelessness in Toronto, and also other large Canadian cities (Filion, 1991; Dear and Wolch, 1993; Ley, 1996a; Layton, 2000; Harris, 2000; Peressini and McDonald, 2000). Estimates of the magnitude of displacement are at best sketchy because of empirical difficulties in tracking the displaced and assessing how far gentrification is responsible for residential turnover, but it has been estimated that over 1700 rooms in rooming-houses per year were lost in the City of Toronto between 1982 and 1986 as a result of demolition and deconversion back to owner occupation (Peressini and McDonald, 2000, p.531). Figure 6 shows the decline in the number of *licensed*²⁶ rooming houses in the City of Toronto since the early 1980s, from figures I obtained from two sources.

²⁶ The total number of rooming houses in the city far exceeds the numbers shown here, as it was estimated by the City’s Homelessness Action Task Force (1999) that there are over 1000 *unlicensed* rooming houses in Toronto.

The City of Toronto provides a consistently higher total than the Rupert Coalition, a non-profit group set up following a horrendous fire in a dilapidated east-end rooming house in 1989 in which ten roomers died, and one has to treat the Coalition's data as more reliable since the group exist solely to champion the rights, needs and safety of low-income tenants in Toronto. Qualms about reliability, however, must not obscure the fact that both sets of figures depict an alarming pattern - the gradual erosion of this form of affordable housing. As Fillion (1991) has warned, "[t]he specific impact of gentrification on Toronto tenants is to exacerbate the tightness of the rental market by causing the withdrawal of generally cheap accommodation from this market" (p.563). Together with gentrification (see Plate 11), some additional and not unconnected factors have contributed to the withdrawal of rooming houses. These include the lack of profits and high operating costs for landlords, NIMBYism from middle-class residents' associations (Lyons, 2000), new zoning restrictions, and closure through illegality and poor maintenance/safety standards. The cumulative effect has been a major disruption of "what was always a fragile mechanism for providing housing for the poor" (Harris, 2000, p.388).

In the late '80s and early '90s, some of South Parkdale's rooming houses and bachelorette buildings, just as the City of Toronto predicted, began to experience 'renovation activity', as the west-end became subject to what Ley (1996a) has usefully termed "the interlocking relationship of inner-city reinvestment for the middle-class, and the knock-on effects of tenant displacement and the erosion of affordable housing" (p.70). The resettlement of middle-class homeowners and tenants in South Parkdale (which has picked up pace during the 1990s) has caused all kinds of housing dilemmas for the large number of low-income tenants in the neighbourhood, at the forefront of which is the displacement, or threat of displacement, resulting from either the closure or deconversion of rooming houses and bachelorette buildings. Those that have remained unrenovated are often a source

Figure 6: The decline of licensed rooming houses in City of Toronto, 1981-2001



of community antagonism, especially on the part of the South Parkdale Residents' Association (SPRA), a small group of middle-class homeowners who have joined together to voice their concerns to the municipal government about the continued presence of illegally converted, overcrowded and unsightly housing - a presence which they view as the ball and chain of the neighbourhood, holding it back from returning to their ideal of 'Parkdale Village'. Where the SPRA are primarily concerned with the effects on the community and their property values, tenant advocacy groups in the neighbourhood are concerned with the abysmal and hazardous conditions for many low-income (and often mentally ill or disabled) tenants in these dwellings, and have lobbied hard for the City's recognition of and action towards these conditions (see Plate 12). By the mid-1990s, the City was under intense pressure from South Parkdale's residents, bombarded with persistent yet differing kinds of complaints about rooming houses and bachelorettes. The City realised that action on the low-income housing situation in the neighbourhood was required to mediate the ongoing conflicts of interest within its borders, and the remainder of this section will concentrate on the rationale, goals and implications of this approach.

In December 1996, the City of Toronto passed an 'interim control by-law' that prohibited any rooming house/bachelorette development or conversion in the administrative Ward which contains South Parkdale (Ward 2 at the time, now Ward 14), pending the outcome of an area study. The results were released in July 1997, in the form of proposals for discussion (among community groups) entitled 'Ward 2 Neighbourhood Revitalization' (CTUDS, 1997). A discourse analysis of the document provides a fascinating insight into what the City of Toronto viewed as the principal social problem of the area – the presence of low-income single persons in single-person dwellings. The broad objective of the proposals was spelled out concisely and without disguising the intent:

"To stabilize a neighbourhood under stress and restore a healthy demographic balance, without dehousing of vulnerable populations" (p.17, emphasis added).

Tables, graphs and most importantly language were used to illustrate what they viewed as an 'unhealthy' balance:

“[T]he area has gone from a stable neighbourhood, with a healthy mix of incomes and household types, to one with *a disproportionately large number of single occupancy accommodation*” (p.1, emphasis added).

“At the request of Councillor Korwin-Kucynski....[the] Land Use Committee requested the Commissioner of Planning and Development...to report back on *a strategy to encourage families to return to Ward 2*” (p.3, emphasis added).

It does not take sophisticated decoding of this document to realise that a concentration of singles is viewed as unhealthy, whilst a concentration of families is viewed as healthy – therefore an influx of families is seen as the remedy for the condition in which South Parkdale currently finds itself. While the objective states that ‘dehousing’ of vulnerable populations would be avoided during revitalization, it is not easy to see how this can be achieved because, as I have demonstrated, South Parkdale’s most vulnerable are singles – the welfare-dependent, mentally ill and socially isolated. A defensible argument can be put forward that these proposals were not drawn up to improve the conditions for singles already in South Parkdale, but drawn up to *reduce* the percentage of singles in the neighbourhood, with middle-class families from other areas taking their place.

It is instructive here to turn to the work of Sommers (1998) on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. In his absorbing historiography of a neighbourhood with a history of investment, disinvestment and reinvestment not dissimilar to that of South Parkdale, Sommers demonstrates that pathological representations of single males living in lodging houses and single room occupancy hotels have been implicated in the social construction of the ‘skid road’ neighbourhood (as it was formerly known), and served to legitimise revitalization proposals:

“Since the early 1950s...the presence of large numbers of single men and their problematic conduct had been treated as a primary causal factors in the deterioration of the built environment....[and] the skid road’s inhabitants were considered to be the *cause* of urban blight and decay. *The skid road was distinguished precisely by its lack of both families and the respectability that somehow accompanied them.* ...Skid road Vancouver...was socially constructed as a zone of abjection populated by abject figures whose conduct resulted in rampant disease, disorder and danger, which put both individuals and the larger community at risk of degradation” (p.296-7, emphasis added).

There is a striking parallel here with how South Parkdale's problems were constructed in the 1997 proposals of the City of Toronto. Metaphors of disease and decay accentuated the somehow inferior status of single tenants (both sexes in the Toronto case) relative to family home owners, and blame for the neighbourhood's decline was placed on individual fecklessness and deviance (such as drug dealing and prostitution) rather than the complex entanglements of policy-led deinstitutionalization and disinvestment which are the principal reasons behind the neighbourhood's troubles.

As they house a significant proportion of the large percentage of singles in the neighbourhood, new legislation concerning rooming houses and bachelorettes was proposed in the document. Working on the woefully incorrect assumption that "an oversupply of small units has existed for some time" (CTUDS, 1997, p.23), two strategies were put forward. First, a new zoning system that would limit the number of units permitted in new developments to 'one or two units per lot' and prohibit any additional small apartments and small units. The rationale confirms the intention to attract families:

"Limiting the number of units in future conversions to two will automatically ensure that at least one, and probably both the units will be large enough for family occupancy. The second rental unit, if provided as a rental unit, *could assist a young family in carrying a mortgage on their house*" (p.26-7, emphasis added).

Second, plans were drawn up to deal with existing rooming houses and bachelorettes in the form of 'strategic prosecutions' and possible closures of the 'worst-case' properties, enforcement of minimum health and safety standards, and the inspection and legalisation of current conversions (as many are illegal following the ban on new conversions placed in 1978). If it were not for the language of family life contained throughout the report, one would think that this second strategy was a sensible and humane way of improving the conditions for tenants in these properties, but one cannot help but be sceptical about the broader motive behind these plans, particularly after reading this sentence:

“[We will] deal fairly with properties that already contain bachelorettes and rooming houses, so that the credibility of the City’s Zoning By-law is not diminished, the properties are maintained at, or above, minimum health and safety standards and, over time, *these small units are gradually replaced with larger units and the tenants are relocated*” (p.17, emphasis added).

The proposals in the draft and final report the following year were presented at a community meeting organised by the City in South Parkdale in October 1998. Tensions were high following a fire at a huge rooming house on Queen Street in which two people died²⁷, and the meeting was taken over by the Parkdale Common Front, a coalition of anti-poverty activist groups, who were united against any form of discriminatory zoning and argued that these proposals were tantamount to ‘social cleansing’ (Lyons, 1998; Kipfer and Keil, 2002). It was bringing the buildings up to standard, rather than prosecuting owners, shutting them down or reducing unit size, which was the preferred solution for these groups. The City went back to the drawing board, and throughout the next few months, demonstrations took place outside City Hall to protest against the proposals (see Figure 7). Responding to criticism that they had been exclusive of low-income interests in the neighbourhood, the City then invited members of all stakeholders to a series of meetings, in what became known as the ‘Parkdale Conflict Resolution’. In October 1999, the outcome of the meetings was published (CTUDS, 1999a), and it still contains some interesting phrasing:

“The proliferation of illegally converted small dwelling spaces has contributed to the decline of health of the community” (p.3).

It was the dwellings themselves, not the unhappy coincidence of urban renewal, disinvestment and deinstitutionalization which led to their proliferation and

²⁷ This tragic event, at 1495 Queen Street in September 1998, was blamed on a transsexual schizophrenic resident of the rooming house called Tiffany Ponchartrain, and was the subject of a remarkable investigative documentary by CBC TV’s ‘The Fifth Estate’ (aired on 14th March 2001). Tiffany was subjected to appalling treatment and prejudice by Toronto police, bullied into confession, and held without bail for nearly two years. Tiffany was later exonerated, for no evidence was ever found that she had been involved in the fire. It was discovered that the fire was caused by the accidental ignition of a sofa from a glowing cigarette butt. The rooming house in question was poorly maintained, with no safety standards and an absentee landlord – the two people who died had no means of escape. This incident is now used by the tenant advocates to demonstrate that something has to be done about the conditions in which poor people live in South Parkdale, and that, in the words of a mental health outreach worker, “gentrification is not the answer – fix up these buildings for people who live in them, not for anyone else” (Bart, interview, 11th February 2001).

SOCIAL CLEANSING IN PARKDALE



DEMONSTRATION

When: THURSDAY, MAY 13, 1999 at 12 noon

**Where: Corner of Queen Street West & Cowan Avenue
(In front of the Parkdale Library)**

Leave for City Hall at 1:00 p.m.

FREE FOOD and POP

- The City of Toronto is declaring war on the tenants of Parkdale.
- They want to shut down small apartments and rooming houses by enforcing a City "BY-LAW" which prohibits rooming houses and bachelorette apartments. This discriminates against people of low income and disabilities who need this kind of housing. This is Social Cleansing.
- The City has already shut down 4 Elm Grove (a bachelorette building) and evicted all the tenants.
- Now they want to shut down other bachelorettes and rooming houses.
- Don't let them get away with this.
- If the City of Toronto is as serious about homelessness as they say they are, they should not shut down any bachelorettes and rooming houses until the crisis in affordable housing is fixed.
- Join us on Thursday, May 13, at 12 Noon at the Corner of Queen and Cowan.
- Join us to visit Mayor Mel Lastman to tell him that if the City of Toronto is serious about homelessness, it should not shut down any bachelorettes or rooming houses. It should fix them up.

FIX THEM UP, DON'T SHUT THEM DOWN

FIX THEM UP, DON'T KICK US OUT

THE COMMON FRONT TO DEFEND POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

(416) 760-2149 Or (416) 925-6939

Figure 7 - Anti-gentrification activism in South Parkdale, 1999

concentration, that *still* constituted the target of blame. However, the report is much quieter on the issue of attracting families and there is no mention of restricting future developments to one or two units per lot – clearly the issue of most concern to the Parkdale Common Front. Despite this retraction, the 1996 ban on all new rooming houses and conversions remained in place, and a team of planners and building inspectors was formed to deal with the overcrowding, illegality and poor safety of many of the existing multi-unit dwellings, called the Parkdale Pilot Project (PPP). Their manifesto is presented in Figure 8.

The requirement for licensing eligibility most relevant to this discussion is that all units in a building must comply with the minimum unit size of 200 square feet (p.14). As I mentioned earlier, a study undertaken in 1976 by the City of Toronto revealed that many bachelorette units are smaller than 200 square feet – as many remain unchanged since this study was undertaken, bringing buildings up to standard would almost certainly lead to the loss of smaller units, and displacement of tenants. When this was pointed out by some bachelorette owners, the City relaxed its stringency, saying that “the Pilot Group should have sufficient latitude to consider other factors when making a decision about the possible legalization of units which may not meet this standard” (CTUDS, 1999b, p.3) – the other factors being tenant satisfaction with their residence and a safe, good quality small unit.

The PPP was ordered to split rooming houses and bachelorette buildings into three separate time periods, each with different criteria for assessment – pre-1978, post-1978, and post-1996. If the building owner could provide evidence of the date of conversion, pre-1978 conversions were considered legal, but still had to undergo safety inspections. Post 1978 conversions were considered illegal, and subject to the most stringent inspections in order to be legalised, and post-1996 conversions were strictly not allowed and to be shut down, as

“it was felt that anyone who undertook conversions in the face of the absolute prohibition [the 1996 ban on conversion] was a scofflaw and that such complete indifference to the law should not be tolerated” (Director of PPP, interview, 20th June 2001).

Parkdale Pilot Project

What are we doing?

- Retain housing
- Improve building and housing safety and standards
- Community improvement

How are we doing it?

- Regularize existing bachelorettes and illegal rooming houses
- License regularized bachelorettes and rooming houses
- Ensure ongoing compliance with standards

When will we do it?

NOW!!!



Figure 8 - The manifesto of the Parkdale Pilot Project (Source: City of Toronto).

The process of post-1978 legalisation is tedious but worth documenting. First of all the properties are identified by files at City Hall, or from inspectors walking the streets and noting down what looks like a rooming house/bachelorette building. Some of the more conscientious landlords/owners may come forward voluntarily to apply for a license, but if not, the landlord/owner will then receive a letter of invitation that their property is eligible to be regularised, and then must complete an application form. The building is then inspected, followed by a visit by a plans examiner to check fire and safety standards, and then the landlord is called in for a meeting to be informed about what is to be done, and how long he has to do it (a maximum of sixty days). Each case is then presented to the Parkdale Housing Committee, a new coalition of neighbourhood organisations which developed during the Conflict Resolution process, with the intention of seeking locally informed views on the building in question. Next, there is a community meeting for all people living within 120 metres of the property, for residents to express any concerns they might have about the work to be done, or about the property in general. If a tenant is temporarily displaced because of major upgrading to a unit, the City will assist in the quest for temporary accommodation if the landlord cannot help, but cannot guarantee its provision. When the work is done, there is another formal inspection, and then the whole case goes to City Council for approval, and a license is issued. The building is then inspected once a year for three years.

I tracked down the Director of the PPP, and her comments provided a revealing glimpse into the continued wish of the City to reduce the percentage of single-person housing:

“Generally accepted planning principles suggest that healthy neighbourhoods support a diversity of housing opportunities for families, couples and singles. There is a planning concern that by tipping the balance too much in favour of small, essentially single-person housing, that healthy diversity will be lost and the area will become ghettoised as more and more of the housing stock is abandoned by families and converted into bachelorettes and rooming houses.So what we are doing now is bringing current conversions into the light, and banning all new ones” (Director of PPP, interview, 20th June 2001).

The City Councillor for the administrative Ward which contains South Parkdale, a man frequently referred to with derision by the neighbourhood's poorer residents and their advocates, made his views on the situation very clear to me:

"The City of Toronto has a responsibility to provide safe housing for ex-psychiatric patients, but my community shouldn't take the full load, and the reason it has in the past is because of the proliferation of small, cheap units. When a building is converted into bachelorettes, it's hard to deconvert back to a larger property again, so the zoning restrictions remain in place to ensure that Parkdale doesn't collapse into slum conditions" (City Councillor for Ward 14, interview, 2nd April 2001).

These comments suggest that the City of Toronto are now using the laws on building safety and licensing to fulfil a broader objective, which is to re-balance the population of South Parkdale in what might be considered as a new kind of 'municipally-managed gentrification' (Forrest and Murie, 1988, p.148) – a concerted effort to break away from the social geographies of South Parkdale's immediate traumatised past. While the move to inspect some of these dreadful properties and improve health and safety standards for the tenants can only be a good thing, there is much in the planning proposals and documents, not to mention much in what I heard from community residents, to suggest that gentrification is a priority equal to, and possibly higher than, the improvement of low-income tenants' living standards. The comments of the Executive Director of the Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC), a drop-in centre for the homeless and mentally ill in the heart of South Parkdale (Plate 13), lend considerable credence to this suggestion:

"The history of bad rooming house operators in Parkdale was a major influence behind the current policy, because so many of these places were overcrowded with tenants living in awful conditions, with slumlords taking no interest in the property. Take 1495 Queen Street as an example. There were 52 people living in that building, most of them socially isolated, mentally ill people with nowhere else to go. They were each paying the landlord on average about 400 dollars a month, which means he had 20000 dollars a month in rent payments, but was putting nothing back into the building for maintenance, and we all know what happened there [the fire in 1998 I mentioned earlier, in which two people died]. I think the City's legislation was a response to these poorly run rooming houses as they were extremely unsafe, and in many instances the tenants were left to their own devices and they became crack houses, which of course is a serious issue for a neighbourhood and a community. But the problem with the zoning legislation is that it was proposed in a neighbourhood with one of the largest, if not the largest, populations of psychiatric survivors in Canada, and the people living in

rooming houses like this have nowhere else to go. *Admittedly there's also an obvious drive to encourage more families to live in Parkdale, as singles are seen as less sensitive to community issues, so the legislation was perhaps intended to make space for a family value ethic which Parkdale has not had since the before the Gardiner [Expressway]*" (Executive Director of PARC, interview, 11th April 2001, emphasis added).

In recent years, responsibility for this drive to encourage more families has not only been in the hands of the City, but also, indirectly, the provincial government. While provincial policies are not geared towards particular neighbourhoods, they nevertheless have a significant influence on the ways in which local urban spaces are lived and contested, and this discussion must move to accommodate an awareness of the details and effects of broader tenant housing policy.

4.3.4 Provincial housing policy and the links to South Parkdale's gentrification

"Everything is in the landlord's hands right now. So you have to bring in legislation which levels the playing field, so the best thing that can happen to tenants right now is to have thousands and thousands of new units built with the additional money that comes from ending rent controls. It's a crucial step in creating a climate where the private market will again invest in the rental real estate market. Upwards of 20000 new rental units will be built as a result of these policies" (Al Leach, former Ontario Minister for Housing, 1996, quoted on CBC Radio, January 2001).

The implications of municipally managed gentrification in South Parkdale must be placed in the context of recent provincial legislation concerning tenants. In 1995, an aggressively neo-liberal Conservative administration was elected into power in Ontario, under the banner of a 'Common Sense Revolution' led by Premier Mike Harris. Their path to power was facilitated by a strong showing of voters in exurban communities outside the City of Toronto, and profound changes in Toronto's administration have unfolded since the controversial creation of a 'megacity' – the amalgamation of seven individual municipalities in an attempt to cement Toronto's position into the network of 'global cities' (see Keil, 2000, 2002, for a detailed account of these changes). The power base of Toronto has thus suburbanised, leading to frequent conflicts of interest between the provincial and municipal governments, as Keil (2000) shows:

“In the eyes of...consolidationists in Tory Ontario, the urban is synonymous with pathology and, more importantly, an ever-present source of resistance to neoliberal globalization.... [E]x-urban Tory-held provincial ridings have been the power base for the anti-union and anti-urban policies of the Mike Harris government” (p.777).

Housing policy has been a major battle ground between these two levels of government, and the effects of the many policy contradictions concerning tenants have been felt most acutely in inner-city districts such as South Parkdale, where the majority of residents are tenants. In June 1998, the unfortunately named ‘Tenant Protection Act’, devised by the provincial government in 1996, came into effect. The hallmark of this piece of legislation was the introduction of *vacancy decontrol* – the elimination of rent control on vacant units. When an apartment becomes vacant through ‘natural turnover’, under this new act the landlord may charge whatever they think they can make on the unit to a new tenant. Higher revenues from rents are supposed to encourage the private sector to invest in more rental housing, but since the number of new rental units built in Ontario has declined from 1532 in 1990 to 275 in 2000 (CBC Radio, “The High Price of a Home”, January 2001), the predictions of 20000 new rental units by the former Ontario Minister for Housing are wildly inaccurate. As is commonly understood by anyone with even a passing interest in housing affairs, it is rarely profitable for the private sector to build *affordable* rental housing. As Layton (2000) points out, with the same government’s slashing of welfare payments by 21.6% in 1995, “low-income tenants are living on such modest means that they can never produce rental payments sufficient to cover the construction, mortgage and maintenance costs of newly-built housing” (p.85). One only has to look at the explosive growth in the luxury condominium sub-market in Toronto to see exactly where the real-estate interests of the private sector lie.

The fall in new rental apartment construction has led to a tumbling of the vacancy rate in Toronto. In 1996, the rate was already low at 1.2%, but by 2000, it had fallen to a ten-year low of 0.6%, meaning that only 6 in 1000 rental units are available at any given time (CBC, 2001). By the end of 2001 it had improved slightly to 0.9% (Gillespie, 2001c) but this is still a woeful situation for anyone looking for an affordable place to live in the city - a vacancy rate which housing analysts consider ‘healthy’ is 2.5% (Gillespie, 2001a). The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment

in October 2000 was a record \$833 per month (Mahoney, 2001, p.4), a disturbing figure considering the monthly welfare payment at the same time for a single person was \$520, of which \$390 is 'shelter allowance'. Just under one quarter of tenants in Toronto spend more than 50% of their pre-tax income on rent (CBC, 2001), another sobering figure when bearing in mind that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation deems rent affordable if it is no more than 30% of a tenant's pre-tax income. In short, there is a massive shortage of affordable housing in Toronto, and it is no coincidence that the numbers of people sleeping on the streets have increased dramatically in recent years (Layton, 2000; Peressini and McDonald, 2000).

Layton's (2000) assessment of the Tenant Protection Act is even more chilling, and serves as a good introduction to the implications of its combination with gentrification in the South Parkdale context:

"The ironically named Tenant Protection Act accomplished precisely the opposite result for tenants – exposing them to increased pressure by making evictions more profitable and easier to accomplish" (p.81).

The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (ORHT), the administrative body who process rent increase and eviction applications, have three offices all with very large catchment areas and compile data accordingly, making a neighbourhood analysis all but impossible. However, at the City level, there are two indications of the effects of vacancy decontrol. Firstly, there has been a staggering increase in applications for above-guideline rent increases. Each year, landlords are only allowed to raise the rent by a certain percentage (usually around 3%), but they can apply to the ORHT to raise this percentage if they can demonstrate a legitimate reason. In 2001, there were 521 applications in a two month period (July and August), affecting 11% of city's rental stock. This is a massive increase from the previous year, where there were 300 applications in a twelve month period (Gillespie, 2001b). In 2001, the rent-increase guideline was 2.9%, but rents in Toronto increased an average of 4.8% (Monsebraaten, 2002). Maintenance improvements and upgrades that were not worth doing before vacancy decontrol can now prove to be an excellent investment, as a landlord can uproot a tenant who cannot afford a rent increase in order to attract a new tenant to whom a much higher rent can be charged. In November 1999, the City

approved a \$300,000 fund to help tenants and tenant associations dispute applications for rent increases above the allowed guideline (CBC, 2001), which can be taken as indicative of this growing problem.

Secondly, at the provincial level (I was unable to obtain City-level data), there has been a noticeable recent increase in applications for evictions. In 1997, there were 49,679 eviction applications, and by 2000 this figure had increased by 23.3% per year to 61,278 (Mahoney, 2001, p.12). The Tenant Protection Act provides an often irresistible incentive for a landlord to evict a low-income tenant, upgrade their properties, and attract new, higher-income and higher revenue-generating tenants. It therefore comes as no surprise that from September 1998 to December 1999, the backlog in 'lock out and harassment applications' filed by tenants grew by 101% province-wide (Mahoney, 2000, p.6). Also, if a tenant receives an eviction notice, they only have five calendar days to contest it at the ORHT, which is a huge problem for people with English or French language difficulties, or mental illnesses/disabilities. If a tenant does not contest within five days, they are evicted by default. This unnecessarily brutal system of administration has led the Tenant Protection Act to be dubbed the 'Landlord Protection Act' by nearly all the tenant advocates in the city.

How have these changes to rental housing policy affected tenants in South Parkdale? Qualitative evidence suggests that landlords are less likely to negotiate if a low-income tenant (of which there are many) falls into arrears of rent payments, as now they can attract a new tenant to whom they can charge whatever they like. This "has reaped absolute havoc" for low-income tenants in South Parkdale, according to a legal worker working in housing issues at Parkdale Community Legal Services (a non-profit legal aid clinic):

"Here, with so many people being on welfare, if they drop the welfare payments or if someone gets disentitled then their whole life can be turned upside down. In the past you could get your landlord to negotiate with you. The landlord would think "ok, what happens if they pick up in the night and leave, well I'm out of the money, so I might as well have them in there paying rent if there's a likelihood they will make up on any debts owed, and maybe it's best to have them paying something rather than not have them at all", so they would say let them stay. *Now the impetus is to get rid of them, totally, as they will pay off the arrears they lose when they get a richer tenant paying way more*

rent.... The landlord has no reason, if he thinks he can get more for that unit, to forgive the people who are in arrears of rent” (Legal Worker with PARC, interview, 12th February 2001, emphasis added).

Also, according to this same respondent, evictions for reasons other than arrears of rent appear to be on the rise:

“In Parkdale it’s anything, anything at all. I’ve heard them all. From noise, to damage, to making room for the landlord’s family, a pet they suddenly decide they won’t allow anymore. I can’t think there are just suddenly more bad tenants in the neighbourhood! *This is no coincidence.... the stories I have heard show that the Tenant Protection Act is contributing to gentrification.* The landlord has a huge financial incentive towards getting a low-paying tenant out, and if they have no conscience, then the provincial laws are in their favour to assist with the eviction” (ibid., emphasis added).

Low-income tenants in South Parkdale can find themselves on the edge of an eviction precipice, where the slightest of concerns might lead to their landlord pushing them over the edge. Listen to the words of Yudon, a Tibetan immigrant who arrived in Toronto with her family in 1998 as political refugees, now living in a tiny bachelorette in the neighbourhood:

“We’re really scared of our landlord, we do whatever he says. If there is a maintenance problem we try to fix it ourselves if it is not too big, as if we ask him to do it he will send us the bill” (Yudon, interview, 20th March 2001).

She had also faced a rent hike:

“A year after we moved into our apartment, the landlord appeared on our doorstep with a letter saying that our rent was going to go from \$580 to \$685. I tried to plead with him but he wouldn’t let me, and I didn’t know if he was allowed to do this, so I went to [Parkdale Community] Legal Services to see what they could do. They told me that my landlord is a nasty man who takes advantage of recent immigrants and poor people as he thinks we do not understand the rules and all the forms you have to complete, and also he knows we are afraid of being kicked out. When the Legal Services people said that I needed to provide a copy of the landlord-tenant agreement for them to help me, I called him to ask for it and then he showed up at my door again saying, ‘well, what can you pay?’ and he said ‘if you promise me you will never go to the Legal Services people ever again, I will give you a discount’. So we agreed on \$630 a month, and he said to me ‘if you can’t pay up on time you’re out of here’” (ibid.).

Yudon continued to tell me about an ongoing predicament that is faced not just by her family, but by other tenants in the same building:

“Everyone in the building is really scared of him. If we complain, the City inspectors might show up and we are going to get thrown out of here as we are probably in here illegally as none of us have signed a lease, and it’s really damp and cold in the winter, and we don’t have a fire escape. My neighbour told me that the inspectors are never on our side, always with the landlord” (ibid.).

Yudon and her family are thus in a no-win situation – if they complain, they face mandatory displacement from a building which, when I saw it, was clearly not up to standard, and if they don’t complain, they remain tenants trapped with an unethical landlord, living in sub-standard accommodation and dreading another inevitable rent increase letter. Some more evidence of a displacement threat, this time from a maintenance improvement intended to attract a new tenant, is provided by Celia, an unemployed single mother with bi-polar disorder living in a bachelorette building with her two year old daughter:

“I’ve lived here since 1995, and I usually paid my \$400 [per month] rent on time. Then two years ago [early 1999], the landlord puts a letter under my door saying he has re-financed the building and has put in a new boiler, so my rent will be \$630, and if I can’t pay it then I should take it up with the [Ontario Rental] Housing Tribunal. So I called him and said you can’t do this as I can’t afford it, and then he says to me ‘I know you have been a good tenant but I can’t afford to keep you here anymore’. So I tell him how desperate I am because I only get \$520 a month in welfare. I think he started to feel sorry for me and then he says I can stay for \$450. I thought that is better than being on the street, so that’s what I pay now” (Celia, interview, 22nd March 2001).

This leaves Celia with \$70 a month for all necessities other than rent, including food for herself and her daughter. Bob, a pensioner who has lived in the neighbourhood for 36 years, told me about the problems facing seniors without a substantial pension fund:

“I got kicked out of my house. I couldn’t afford the rent anymore as it kept going up and up as all these young folks started moving into the neighbourhood. My rent was the same for 15 years, but I think around 1994 it started to creep up as the landlord said his taxes were becoming too high. I fell five months behind and then the landlord had me evicted about two years ago. Then my friend Irene who lived in the apartment next to me says that he then leased it to this couple for \$1050 a month,

which is double what I paid! Now I live with my younger sister on Triller Avenue, but it's not ideal as they are a couple, you know? I'm looking for places all the time, as I don't want to be in a retirement home as I am too young for that, but there's like 1 ad in *The [Toronto] Star* every week and it's gone by the time you call up" (Bob, interview, 23rd March 2001).

Not only are there these distressing stories of displacement, there are also two startling contradictions between the levels of government concerning the current policy on rooming houses and bachelorettes. First, with the Parkdale Pilot Project, where tenants may have to be relocated when a rooming house or bachelorette building undergoes mandatory maintenance/safety improvements, the low vacancy rate across the city (a consequence of provincial policy) means that the landlord and/or the City may have huge difficulties in finding temporary housing for a temporarily displaced tenant. Secondly, and even more serious, when the tenant returns to the improved unit (as they have first right of refusal), or even if they have been there during the improvements, the landlord can *still apply to the province for an above-guideline rent increase* once the improvements are completed - so frequently the costs of regularisation are downloaded to the tenant. It is apparent that even if the municipal government are attempting to improve the existing housing stock 'without dehousing of vulnerable populations' (something that I doubt), their work could be undone by loopholes in the provincial government's Tenant Protection Act, and therefore both levels of government appear to be contributing to the desired rebalance of the 'unhealthy' demographics of South Parkdale. This contradiction in public policy could lead to displacement of both psychiatric survivors and low-income immigrants; a serious social issue if we are to follow the contention made by one of Canada's leading experts on homelessness:

"Arguably the single most significant cause of increasing homelessness in Toronto has been the combined impact of the government's rent policy changes, housing cutbacks and social-service payment reductions" (Layton, 2000, p.103).

4.3.5 'Social tectonics'

Thus far I have presented what I hope is a clear picture of South Parkdale's historical path towards gentrification, and particularly the reasons behind current gentrification as it picks up pace – in short, these are the neighbourhood's attributes, the

encroachment of artists and their patrons, and the contradiction between two levels of government which is having the desired yet morally questionable effect of 'rebalancing' the population of the neighbourhood. Up to this point, I have said less about the social impacts of gentrification, something illuminated by sensitive attention to the qualitative evidence I obtained. The final section of this chapter will thus address how South Parkdale's social geographies of previous decades are being restructured by the gradual arrival of the middle-classes into a highly traumatised area. Above all, the following discussion will demonstrate that gentrification in South Parkdale cannot be considered without reference to its precedent, deinstitutionalization.

As the neighbourhood finally becomes less unequal relative to most other Toronto neighbourhoods, it is now becoming more unequal within its borders. It is instructive to turn to the words of Robson and Butler (2001) in order to explain recent changes. Undertaking qualitative gentrification research in Brixton, London, they found that social relations

"might be characterized as 'tectonic'. That is to say, broadly, that relations between different social and ethnic groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves.Social groups or 'plates' overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the area's social and cultural institutions. This does not make way for an especially cosy settlement, and many residents, middle-class or otherwise, speak of palpable tensions...." (p.77-8).

The 'tectonic' social structure is reinforced in Brixton by minimal class interaction and conflict. As Robson and Butler argue, ways of life and experiences of place are so markedly different between middle- and working-class Brixtonians that they rarely come into social contact with each other, despite 'physical' contact on the streets. It is somewhat ironic that this structure of class isolation and absence of social capital exists in a place which attracts gentrifiers because of its social heterogeneity and multiculturalism. As these authors argued in another paper:

"we believe that overall the gentrification of Brixton has contributed to this 'tectonic' social structure which celebrates diversity in principle but leads to separate lives in practice: it is what we call a celebration of 'Brixton in the mind'" (Butler and Robson, 2001, p.2157).

‘Social tectonics’ is a helpful concept to introduce in an attempt to account for the social consequences of gentrification in South Parkdale, but I take it further and argue that the faultlines of the tectonic structure are unstable because of more social interaction than is the case in Brixton. As rooming houses and bachelorettes are often right next door to gentrifiers’ properties (rather than cut off from each other in islands of poverty and prosperity), it is frequently the case that different classes come into contact with each other in South Parkdale; such social contact is unavoidable.

A geological term, *The Chambers Dictionary* (1999) defines ‘tectonic’ as “relating to structural changes in the earth’s crust caused by upheavals and other movements within it”. If we treat South Parkdale as the crust, the upheaval as gentrification and the ‘other movements’ as class confrontations, structural changes to the crust are certainly occurring, both physically and socially. Palpable tensions arise from the friction between parallel social plates generated by the conflicting attitudes towards low-income housing in the neighbourhood – attitudes which have been amplified by gentrification. Many incoming homeowners (middle-class) are disturbed by the presence of unsightly and/or unsafe rooming houses and bachelorettes, and wish to see them deconverted back into single-family homes for another ‘Parkdale Village’, yet many of the tenants (working-class) who live in them have nowhere else to go and deconversion is thus a prospect with serious and frightening implications. Divisions over the use and exchange value of housing aggravate social class divisions between homeowners and tenants, where the former have more say and political weight because they are valued more by the City and conform to the narrow yet desirable societal norm of home ownership.

One of the ways in which the tectonic condition is generated and perpetuated is by ‘nimbyism’. On the evening of 21st June 2001 I attended a community meeting for people living in the immediate vicinity of a notorious rooming house undergoing legalisation on Cowan Avenue, perhaps the most gentrified street in the neighbourhood. The landlord and tenants of the rooming house were also present, and for two hours, along with the Director of the PPP, they were pummelled with concerns from middle class homeowners, along the following lines:

“I’m concerned that all these bachelorettes and rooming houses have been troublesome and illegal for so many years, and all the City are doing is making them legal without addressing the wider problems that come from this kind of accommodation. We don’t mind tenants in places like 57 Cowan [the building in question in this meeting], we’re happy to have you here, so long as you conform to the certain rules of the street” (Geoffrey, comment at community meeting, 21st June 2001).

“This isn’t about homeowner versus tenant, it’s about making sure that our property is not next door to an eyesore crack house which ruins the look of a great street with garbage, an unkempt lawn, snow drifts, too many cars parked in around it, people yelling at 3.00 in the morning, the police cruising past, that kind of thing” (Sinead, comment at community meeting, 21st June 2001).

Comments like these were usually greeted with a general hum of acceptance from the homeowners present, and there was a definite power imbalance at this meeting, as tenants clearly had more to lose and seemed to be afraid or unable to speak in the face of the overt nimbyism of the homeowners. The latter group were not going to let legalisation of this particular rooming house happen without being satisfied that it would not intrude on their lives and particularly on their property values:

“For years this neighbourhood has been down in the dumps, full of problematic rooming houses exactly like this, and it’s been really encouraging to see that things are starting to change around here. But I am worried that we’re never going to see returns on our investments and all the hard work we’ve done making Parkdale a nice place to live again, not to mention get a quiet night’s sleep, if rooming houses aren’t dealt with one by one and made to conform. Not all of these rooming houses are bad, but the bad ones really harm this community” (Mandy, comment at community meeting, 21st June 2001).

This quotation shows that South Parkdale’s gentrification is leading to the introduction of homeowner exchange value in a neighbourhood dominated for three decades by tenant use value. This is a division that is by no means confined to property terminology – it is also a physical manifestation of a widening social class division which gives South Parkdale its tectonic structure. On many of South Parkdale’s streets, there are very different ways of life, social backgrounds and experiences of neighbourhood, reflected in the very different types of accommodation. In an earlier work on the gentrification of Hackney, London, Butler (1997) has argued that middle-class gentrifiers seek to live a life that is exclusive of those who are not, in their eyes, ‘people like us’. In South Parkdale, incoming

gentrifiers are confronted by an abundance of people who are not like them, and they do not like what they see:

“I knew what this area was like before I got here, so it wasn’t a shock to me to see so many people who struggle to make ends meet. What I realised soon after I arrived was the toll it takes on you to be around antisocial behaviour day in and day out. The cop cruising, the prostitutes, the johns, the wackos in the back alleys selling drugs, people staggering around drunk yelling abuse at you, people yelling at 4 in the morning – it kind of wears you down, and you know there is nothing you can do about it unless you are a cop or an outreach worker. Things have got better in recent years, which I think is because there are people moving in who are not like that, who want to live respectably and make this neighbourhood what it used to be.While I do sympathise with people in Parkdale who haven’t had the chances in life like I have, there are still too many of them in one place, and as we know all too well around here, that can’t ever be a good thing for a community” (Oliver, interview, 19th June 2001).

While this interviewee tries to reveal a compassionate side, I am struck more by something demonstrated by Sophie Watson (1999) in her concise treatment of nimbyism. Attacking Richard Sennett’s (1970) “unambiguous celebration of difference” and particularly his suggestion that there could be no such thing as nimbyism because people could enjoy encountering other social groups and situations, she explains with reference to a controversial mosque in Finsbury Park that, contrary to Sennett’s romantic view, “local residents object to having people who they regard as disruptive or disreputable on their street” and that this hostility arises from “the idea that those unlike ourselves are unknown, are ‘other’ and are thus threatening” (p.219). Oliver’s comments above are testament to this, and his attitude, in the words of Watson, “illustrates the very intense and often difficult political issues which arise out of different people with different needs and circumstances living cheek by jowl in the city” (p.221).

As I spoke to more and more residents and community leaders of South Parkdale, it became increasingly clear that nimby attitudes are very much based on fear of a stigmatised ‘other’ – in this case, the mentally ill. While it would be a gross distortion to argue that these fears are common to every middle-class resident in the neighbourhood (not to mention incorrect to portray these fears as exclusively a middle-class trait), it would also be a distortion to gloss over the extent to which the

prospects of many of the neighbourhood's less fortunate are worsened by sentiments which arise from wide disparities in life chances and experiences, and a poor understanding of the difficulties facing people struggling to adjust to life outside an institutional environment. It is interesting here to turn once more to the comments of the Executive Director of PARC, who explained just how much gentrifiers' fears of the 'other' can end up controlling psychiatric survivors:

"You see, the people we get in here have debilitating illnesses, a lack of support networks, friends, family – they are socially isolated and depressed individuals who have had a horrible deal in life and now are in need of three things – a home, a job and a friend. If they can have these three things, research shows that their symptoms will diminish. But because of the ways in which they are demonised by the media, they become victims of nimbyism from other residents in the neighbourhood. We've had a couple of phone calls from worried residents saying that 'PARC should be out of the neighbourhood and in an industrial area' and 'I'm not happy about PARC being here because it means that these people will flock to Parkdale' [PARC is unique in Toronto]. However, psychiatric survivors are far more a danger to themselves than a danger to others, as studies have shown time and time again, but the way they are portrayed in the media means that nobody wants them around. Because of nimbyism, *and because of gentrification which is likely to involve people with nimby attitudes*, the deinstitutionalized end up either homeless or in completely inappropriate accommodation which worsens their condition. The only landlords who will take them are the real scumbags, and then there's serious safety and exploitation issues. *For me, it's this 'these people' attitude which is the most serious issue facing Parkdale*" (Executive Director of PARC, interview, 11th April 2001, emphasis added).

It is fascinating to square this telling and accurate assessment of nimbyism with some more anecdotes from middle-class respondents. One individual made his feelings on the symptoms of poverty very clear:

"It does become rather tiring living here sometimes, when you constantly live near drug dealers, hookers, and these real low-life, pathetic creatures. We joined a Residents Association which made a real effort to get the message across that these standards of behaviour were not acceptable in our neighbourhood, and that we needed to get rid of these people to stop the neighbourhood becoming like the South Bronx. We worked closely with the police in the early 90s to achieve this goal, and things have improved quite a lot" (Bruce, interview, 21st February 2001).

Bruce is not alone in his desire to rid South Parkdale of what he sees as its 'undesirable' element, a desire that is based on a misunderstanding of the problems facing who he terms 'low-life, pathetic creatures'. During one particularly

illuminating conversation, a marketing manager for a loft-development company on the fringes of South Parkdale, very near the Queen Street Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, said the following:

“Our company received a couple of ranting phone calls from these wackos saying ‘what are you doing to our neighbourhood?’ by building lofts here, and that they were going to make our lives hell if we didn’t pull out. Then we had this graffiti go up on our construction site saying ‘There goes the neighbourhood’. That’s just crazy, and I just didn’t get it because all we are doing is cleaning up a vacant building, encouraging investment, and making it a nicer place to hang out” (Kate, interview, 26th February 2001).

Hardly surprising comments, perhaps, from someone trying to sell a gentrifier’s lifestyle very near a place which has been stigmatised for generations, but her remarks do provide an indication of the tectonic situation brought about by the imminent introduction of a new class of resident. During another interview, I was confronted by another case of a gentrifier misunderstanding deinstitutionalization. Mike, who bought a house in South Parkdale in 1998, was irritated by the presence of people not like him:

“There is an ever-present population of vagrants and drunks, and lots of people who seem to have checked out of the mental hospital too early. I just ignore them as there isn’t any point in being neighbourly as they will probably slap me or say some weird shit which I won’t be able to understand. Plus, you just avoid the areas where they hang out and God help you if you live next door to a rooming house. The sooner they get sold and renovated, the better, as they are a real nuisance and barrier to community spirit I think” (Mike, interview, 14th March 2001).

Mike’s comments demonstrate not only nimbyism but also a glaring lack of compassion for his many mentally ill neighbours. These are not innocent, harmless accounts of South Parkdale’s ‘ever-present population’, and Mike is no anomaly – several other interviewees also said that they ignore such people unless they are forced into contact (as is often the case over a rooming house/bachelorette dispute). However, to ignore the deinstitutionalised is to exacerbate their condition. This was made all too apparent after reading journalist Scott Simmie’s account of his journey through Canada’s mental health care system after being diagnosed with schizophrenia (Simmie and Nunes, 2001). In this remarkable book he documents the awful burden of stigma attached to anyone with a psychiatric disorder, arguing that

“stigma is worse than the disorder” (p.295), and that misconceptions of the mentally ill

“are *automatically* applied, denying the person any opportunity to disprove them. When that happens to a person again and again, it’s not unusual for them to internalise that stigma and start losing hope” (p.301).

Arguably the main social problem brought about by the gentrification of South Parkdale is that it is bringing in many people who are not familiar with the very particular and complex history of deinstitutionalization in the neighbourhood. As many gentrifiers have been insulated from this era in other neighbourhoods (which did not receive anything approaching the high number of discharged patients South Parkdale received), they are alarmed by what they see, and perhaps understandably are afraid of this mentally unstable ‘other’. Their automatic misconceptions of illnesses such as schizophrenia provide the mechanism upon which social tectonics operates, stealing attention away from the often desperate conditions in which discharged patients have to cope. Superimposed on this are a variety of fear-instigating representations of the mentally ill, combined with the sensationalism of sporadic events inflicted by people acutely unwell (such as random acts of violence or murders), ensuring that “an invisible stamp of ‘the other’ is often squarely applied to the forehead of someone with a mental disorder” (p.295). The tragedy of mental illness is thus buried beneath stereotypical images of dangerous nuts, wackos, crazies and psychos; images which discourage adequate evaluation of how an unhappy coincidence of politics, ideology, the media and circumstance works to facilitate the path to personal despair following deinstitutionalization. Ley’s classic (1974) work in a misunderstood black inner-city district in Philadelphia discussed the devastating consequences of stereotypes woven into the social relations of a distressed area, and the following sentences, while nearly thirty years old and used to describe cross-cultural interaction, are very applicable to what might be termed ‘cross-mental’ interaction in South Parkdale:

“[There is a] rampant power of a false image to provoke misperception of reality. This tendency is always present in perception under uncertainty..... [T]he image often hardens to an inflexible degree, into a stereotype, a petrified image, an extreme manifestation of information collapse under uncertainty. Like all images, stereotypes have the function not only of imposing order upon a

disordered world, but also of enhancing in-group consensus. ...Stereotypes are images which admit very little variety to the information channels of the system to which they act as gatekeeper. ...The stereotype destroys incoming variety. It does not distinguish or differentiate, but transforms all incoming information to a simpler set" (p.254-5).

I do not wish wholly to detach these comments from the context to which they apply, but I do find 'imposing order upon a disordered world' interesting, because this is how both the middle-classes *and* the working classes view the gentrification of South Parkdale, but with order and disorder meaning very different things. One of the key features of Dear and Wolch's (1987) 'service-dependent ghettos' is that while very distressed areas, they "provided a source of client support; the ghetto acted as a coping mechanism for deinstitutionalized groups" (p.9). While South Parkdale may have come across as disorderly to observers from the outside, it was the only sense of order available for discharged patients, even if the condition of its rooming houses and bachelorettes left a lot to be desired. Its current gentrification, therefore, is viewed as disorderly by these groups, upsetting the status quo and viewed with angst. Laurie, who was discharged from Queen Street in 1992, explains:

"There was nowhere else to go – all the boarding homes on the list I got from Habitat [Services, a non-profit group who assist the poor in their quest for shelter] were in Parkdale. I lived on Triller Avenue in a house with lots of people from the same therapy group....I guess they thought the group would continue all freaking day and night and we'd get better that way! The place sucked big time, it was freezing in the winter, but I'll tell you what, it was better than a shelter, and we all knew that. So when you talk about gentrification, you're talking about a situation where shelters become the only choice now, because all of the old boarding homes are being sold up for people moving in" (Laurie, interview, 8th April 2001).

For Laurie and doubtless many others with similar experiences, gentrification is a disorderly disruption to the way South Parkdale (particularly the nature of its housing) has been functioning as a coping mechanism (see Plate 14). Contrast this with the perspective of many of the incoming middle-class and especially the City of Toronto, for whom South Parkdale is a disorderly arena waiting for the entrance of order in the form of gentrification and gradual 'rebalancing' by a more affluent, more 'respectable' group of residents. The politician with the most say in the fortunes of the neighbourhood exemplifies this perspective:

“In the 1970s, it [the neighbourhood] attracted people who were down on their luck as there was now cheap accommodation, especially the ex-psychiatric patients from the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, and I guess the fabric of the neighbourhood was really kind of at a low back then. But it’s really improved in recent years, through involvement from people in the community, a much bigger police presence, and a real political commitment to clean up the neighbourhood. Crime has dropped dramatically, more than any other neighbourhood in the City in my estimation, and now if you talk to real estate agents they will tell you that Parkdale has some of the best deals in town and is a great place to buy a home, so these are encouraging signs and we’re still working on cleaning up the neighbourhood” (City Councillor for Ward 14, interview, 2nd April 2001).

Such a perspective does not auger well for the non-gentrifiers of South Parkdale. The large population of ‘psychiatric survivors’, facing the awful burden of stigmatisation through stereotyping and a massive lack of both understanding of mental illness and awareness of the inadequacy or absence of care in the community, do not have the sympathy of the official elected to serve the neighbourhood. His sympathies lie with the gentrifiers, who he thinks are ‘improving’ what he frequently referred to in our interview as ‘my neighbourhood’.

Even a surface reading of the qualitative evidence presented in this chapter would lead to the conclusion that there are many kinds of ‘improvement’. The gentrification of South Parkdale might beautify its streets, ‘improve’ the quality of its housing stock, clean up its storefronts and turn it into ‘Parkdale Village’ once more, but it is at the expense of a suffering population who have no say in these ‘improvements’, and for whom a very different kind of improvement is required. The social outcome of exclusive improvement (gentrification) is that tectonic activity is becoming more frequent, and people with emotional challenges are *still* looked upon as at best different and at worst as outlandish psychotics – with, it seems, even less chance of trying to fit into community life than during the era of most intense deinstitutionalization. In his rousing analysis of social exclusion, Sibley (1995) provides words which support my argument:

“[W]hen there is decarceration, the community replicates the territorial divisions that occur when there is a clear policy of separation for the mentally ill, mentally disabled or criminal. Thus, while asylums removed the rest of the mentally ill from the rest of the urban population, deinstitutionalization isolates them also, particularly within inner-city areas” (p.86).

Even today, 40% of all patients discharged from the Queen Street Mental Health Centre end up in South Parkdale (CTUDS, 1997, p.8), at a time when gentrification appears to be accelerating. The final words, summing up the problems which lie at the interface of gentrification and deinstitutionalization, are best left to the Executive Director of PARC, perhaps the most informative of those who I spoke to about these problems:

“The gentrifiers who object to this facility [PARC] being in Parkdale, or object to having a rooming house on their street, or object to someone stopping them in the street asking them for change, simply don’t have a lot of knowledge about the depth of difficulties that human beings can find themselves in, and how difficult it is to get themselves out of difficulties, and how many detours there are along the road” (Executive Director of PARC, interview, 2nd April 2001).

CHAPTER 5 - LOWER PARK SLOPE, NEW YORK CITY: OVERSPILL GENTRIFICATION AND ORGANISED RESISTANCE

“The outermost border of desirable Park Slope used to be Seventh Avenue. Then it was Sixth Avenue. Now it’s Fifth. And Fifth used to be no-man’s-land.... The blocks between Fifth and Fourth....I don’t know. I’m not convinced they’ll hold”.

Realtor quoted in *New York Magazine*, March 12th 2001, p.50.

In this chapter I concentrate exclusively on my other case-study, reporting on research undertaken in Lower Park Slope from mid-July to late December 2001. I will resist the temptation to compare my findings with those from South Parkdale until the next chapter, for fear of losing the detail and substance that can be generated by a specific focus on Lower Park Slope. Comparative research demands that narrative attention should be given to each case in turn before synthesising the evidence collected. While the manner of explanation in this chapter will be similar to Chapter 4, its structure will differ simply because the history of gentrification in the neighbourhood, not to mention its geographical character, differs greatly from the story of South Parkdale. Another major difference here is that Upper Park Slope, a gentrified area which has had a huge influence on the current gentrification of Lower Park Slope²⁸, has been placed under scrutiny by geographers before me (Lees, 1994a, 1996; Lees and Bondi, 1995; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Rothenberg, 1995), and thus my work builds on these findings to advance several important arguments regarding the historical context in which the current gentrification of an adjacent area is taking place. No such advantage existed in South Parkdale, where I had to build a history of investment, disinvestment and reinvestment from a clean slate. This chapter will thus focus less on the past and more on the present, not least because Lower Park Slope provides an excellent opportunity for an academic evaluation of an ongoing local campaign to resist gentrification – a campaign in which I participated, through action research, during my research time in the neighbourhood. My involvement, though not as intense as I would have liked (see Chapter 3), allows

²⁸ For the purpose of this thesis I have divided the large Park Slope neighbourhood into Upper and Lower sections, something also done by the Fifth Avenue Committee, a community organisation to be introduced later in this chapter.

me to place my experiences and thoughts within a large body of theoretically-informed empirical research on the gentrification of many New York City neighbourhoods.

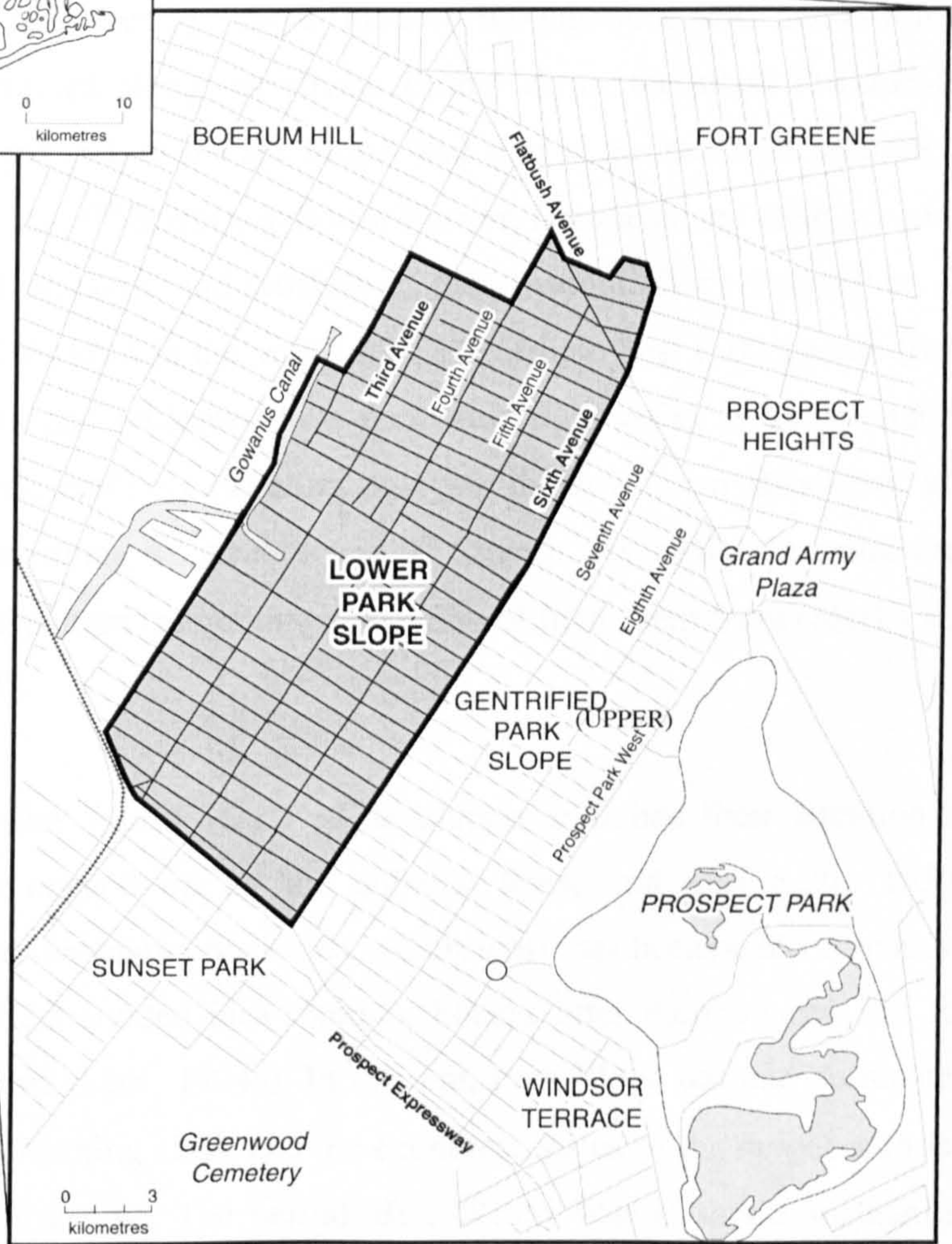
I will begin the discussion by presenting an abbreviated history of the entire 'Park Slope' neighbourhood from secondary sources, which requires attention to the earlier gentrification of Upper Park Slope. While not strictly my case study site, the influence and proximity of Upper Park Slope is immense and an overview is therefore necessary. Following a description of the very different socio-economic conditions which met the arrival of gentrification in Lower Park Slope, I will use primary sources to illustrate and explain the social geographies I observed during my research in the neighbourhood, once more relying on the helpful heuristic of 'social tectonics' (Robson and Butler, 2001) to explain how gentrification is transforming relations between different social groups. The economic and political conditions which affect gentrification (and affect those subject to it) will then be subject to assessment, before switching attention to the local activism which has emerged to challenge the process. Warf (1990) has argued that Brooklyn "offers an excellent laboratory in which to study the interrelations between ethnicity, housing, and the urban division of labour" (p.78) – it is hoped that this chapter will demonstrate that a neighbourhood-level focus provides the microscope under which we can examine these interrelations. In sum, this chapter offers a much needed neighbourhood spotlight on post-recession gentrification in New York City, for there is only one published study to date which offers a careful geographical portrait of the neighbourhood effects of 'third-wave gentrification' (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999, on the Lower East Side). However, this study will be much more detailed, offering a rich empirical account of what the latest wave of gentrification in New York is doing to an area where that wave has arrived with full force.

5.1 A brief history of Park Slope's investment, disinvestment and reinvestment

Park Slope, Brooklyn, roughly three miles from Downtown Manhattan, derives its name from a natural gradient of land which slopes down towards the Gowanus Canal from Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Prospect Park (see Figure 9). It was one of the first residential suburbs of New York City (Lees, 1994a), and



Figure 9 – The Lower Park Slope Study Area, New York City, USA



experienced considerable growth in the final two decades of the nineteenth century through the settlement of merchants, lawyers, doctors and other professionals, able to commute to Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge (completed in 1883). Some enormous mansions were built in the immediate vicinity of Prospect Park, along with handsome 'brownstone' rowhouses, and it became an elite residential community, second only to Brooklyn Heights in Brooklyn status, "a magnet for Brooklyn's well-to-do, a retreat for those who wished to live lavishly" (Jackson and Manbeck, 1998, p.165) away from the increasing density of Manhattan. The legacy today is an enclave containing some of the finest Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne residences in the nation. Nearby, more modest brownstones and brick-fronted properties were constructed along the streets further down the slope towards the Canal (Plates 15 and 16) in Lower Park Slope, and also in the southern sections of the neighbourhood (below 9th Street), to house Eastern European and Irish servants, storeowners, dockland workers, and workers at the Ansonia Clock Factory on 7th Avenue, the largest of its kind in the world by 1890, employing 1500 people (ibid. p.165). Further growth and settlement was facilitated by a series of transportation lines (horsecars, electric trolleys) radiating away from Downtown Brooklyn, and later, two subway lines (along 4th Avenue and 9th Street). By 1910, the entire area was built up into a grid pattern resembling something of its present form (Merlis and Rosenzweig, 1999, p.9).

Construction slowed after World War I as developers switched their attention to other neighbourhoods opened up by the subway lines, and during the 1930s Depression many of the substantial mansions and brownstones became too expensive to maintain, and were subdivided into rooming houses after their owners left for more affordable locations (Lees, 1994a). In this era, Park Slope became dominated by the Irish and Italian working class, and the economic status of the neighbourhood went into a perceptible decline. The period after World War II saw a substantial exodus of Brooklyn's middle-income white residents to, inter alia, the suburbs of Long Island. Suburbanisation was spurred by urban renewal and the construction of expressways under the massive restructuring of New York which took place under Robert Moses (Gandy, 2002), and also the federal mortgage programmes which made new suburban homes available for young families with little or no downpayments. The result was that 750,000 whites (particularly Irish, Italians and

Jews) left Brooklyn for the suburbs between 1940 and 1980²⁹ (Warf, 1990, p.86). ‘White-flight’ away from Park Slope was taking place at a time of a significant increase in black and Hispanic (particularly Puerto Rican) settlement in the neighbourhood, especially in the sections closer to the Gowanus Canal (Lower Park Slope), yet the economic prospects of the neighbourhood’s new immigrants were restricted by blockbusting and institutional disinvestment, particularly ‘redlining’³⁰: the refusal of mortgage lenders to loan money on property in specific inner-city neighbourhoods deemed ‘high-risk’. Redlining everywhere had a racial undercurrent, as the areas receiving fewest mortgage loans (i.e. the highest-risk) were those containing a higher percentage of minority residents, and the areas receiving the most mortgage loans contained a higher percentage of white residents. A study undertaken by the New York Public Interest Group in the mid 1970s (NYPIRG, 1977) examined the geographical distribution of mortgage loans given out by Brooklyn’s seven major lending institutions and found that

“[a]ll seven of the banks surveyed have discriminated against the black population of Brooklyn by channelling mortgage money to those neighbourhoods which are predominantly white” (p.7).

It is important to note, however, that redlining in Park Slope, while not completely divorced from discrimination, did not reach the intense level of ‘racial steering’ associated with many other Brooklyn neighbourhoods in the 1960s and ‘70s – it was much more a case of mortgage lenders not willing to take *any* risks on deteriorating inner city property (Lees, 1994a). Such systematic disinvestment locked the neighbourhood into a spiral of economic decline and devalorization, resulting in physical deterioration and residential abandonment which reached a peak in Park Slope in the mid-1970s, particularly during the 1975-7 fiscal crisis of New York City (Carpenter and Lees, 1995, p.293).

While the 1970s are known for being the high water mark of Park Slope’s fall from grace, this was also the decade when gentrification began to gather steam after its initial appearance in the 1960s (Lees and Bondi, 1995). A matrix of groups, underpinned by state and federal government legislation which encouraged sporadic

²⁹ During this same period, Brooklyn gained 650,000 blacks (Warf, 1990, p.86).

³⁰ Redlining, officially outlawed in 1978, derived its name from the practices of lending institutions of drawing a red line around areas within which mortgages were to be refused to applicants.

reinvestment in ‘rundown’ neighbourhoods (Squires, 1992), was responsible for reinvestment – private individuals, property developers and public utility companies (Carpenter and Lees, 1995, p.295). The first of these groups saw themselves as ‘pioneers’, attracted to the concept of ‘sweat equity’ in the ‘flower-power’ era, and their practices of architectural conservation and historic preservation (locally dubbed ‘brownstoning’³¹) led to the rehabilitation of the much of the neighbourhood’s housing stock (Krase, 1982; Lees, 1994a), not least because the brownstones of devalorised Park Slope were so affordable with attractive investment potential. One of my interviewees gleefully referred to this as the “schoolteacher’s coup”, as middle-class families were buying housing built for millionaires on school teacher’s salaries (Chuck, interview, 18th October 2001). The motive of the brownstoners was significantly strengthened when a large swathe of Park Slope was granted ‘Landmark Preservation Status’ in 1973, which meant attractive tax breaks for anyone wanting to restore and maintain a listed brownstone building. Once these practices were well underway and Park Slope’s economic trajectory was heading upwards, property developers followed and took advantage of demand from a growing band of professional/managerial workers by undertaking numerous condominium and co-operative housing conversions in buildings ripe for gentrification, such as the old Ansonia Clock Factory which was converted into lucrative co-ops and renamed Ansonia Court. The final group, public utility companies, were represented by Con Edison and Brooklyn Union Gas, who upgraded parts of the housing stock in the northern section of Park Slope³². These companies were worried that Park Slope’s 1960s slant towards ghettoization would harm their profits, as Carpenter and Lees (1995) explain:

“Underlying this reinvestment was the need of both utility companies to stabilize the area and thus to keep their profit margins fluid. Revitalization was thus undertaken in an area where gas and electricity usage was in decline” (p.296).

³¹ 1969 saw the emergence of the Brownstone Revival Committee, founded by a Park Slope gentrifier with the aim of saving the remaining historically and architecturally valuable residential brownstones in the city. They even published a newsletter, *The Brownstoner*, containing renovation hints and historical information. See also Kasinitz (1988) for an account of brownstoning in the nearby neighbourhood of Boerum Hill.

³² I have direct experience of this, for I lived on Prospect Place in a building renovated by Brooklyn Union Gas, and several conversations with my landlady revealed just how dilapidated the building had become by the early 1970s, and how cheaply she had purchased it.

As Lees and Bondi (1995) argued, such reinvestment “aided gentrification and promoted confidence in the neighbourhood” (p.246).

Social change on a substantial scale was brought about by gentrification. By the mid-1980s, Park Slope had become home to one of the largest concentration of lesbians in the United States, as Rothenberg (1995) has revealed in a compelling account of the coincidence of the neighbourhood’s gentrification with the well-educated liberal politics of the ‘alternative’ people who moved in during the 1970s. Mainly through word of mouth (Rothenberg’s work is tellingly subtitled “And she told two friends...”) Park Slope became a supportive, liberal and tolerant queer space, with freedom from the stigma or homophobia lesbians might have encountered elsewhere in the city. It generated a reputation as a space which simultaneously accommodated young professionals, straight families *and* gay and lesbian lifestyles – a reputation which contributed to its steady gentrification. During the 1980s, a “ferocious tide of gentrification” (Warf, 1990, p.89) washed through northwestern Brooklyn, and the effect on Park Slope has been described as follows:

“What began as a drizzle turned into a torrent of co-op conversions during the 1980s. Factories, walk-up old-law tenements, grand old brownstones, even former parking garages, were converted into co-ops affordable to a new wave of middle-class couples and families from Manhattan” (Merlis and Rosenzweig, 1999, p.13).

By 1987, gentrification had stabilised in the eastern and northern sections of Park Slope, nearest to Prospect Park, and it was once again a desirable neighbourhood, surpassed only by Brooklyn Heights as Brooklyn’s premier residential district.

This surge of reinvestment, however, was not uniform throughout Park Slope, and it is remarkable how its southern and particularly its lower sections (Lower Park Slope) remained in stark contrast to the gentrification happening closer to Prospect Park. By the early 1980s, Lower Park Slope, always the poorest section of Park Slope, had suffered three decades of systematic disinvestment, culminating in the serious dilapidation and abandonment of some of its housing stock, the erosion of its

economic and tax base³³, a high incidence of poverty among minority groups, and the symptoms of distress and multiple disadvantage such as unemployment, high crime, drug dealing and prostitution. While the neighbourhood did not descend into anything like the level of despair and social unrest seen in the ghettos of eastern Brooklyn such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York and Brownsville, it was nevertheless a place under considerable stress, “ravaged by decay” as one assessment put it (Lawson, 1984, p.248), with little political bargaining power to attract the kind of reinvestment it needed for its residents. Its housing stock was and remains nothing like as handsome as that further ‘up the Slope’, and thus none of it gained Landmark Preservation status, one of the catalysts of gentrification nearer to Prospect Park. The public and private funding which was responsible for the steady gentrification of Upper Park Slope did not spread down to Lower Park Slope, meaning that it largely escaped the earlier rounds of the process which had penetrated a select few Brooklyn neighbourhoods in the 1970s and 1980s. Lower Park Slope was thus in every sense left behind by the ‘success’ of Upper Park Slope, and perhaps this is best expressed by the fact that 7th Avenue became a bustling commercial strip during this time, whilst 5th Avenue, a five-minute walk away, was for the most part the site of boarded-up shops, prostitution, drug dealing and, as one interviewee put it, “men hanging out on the corner with nothing to do but drink malt liquor and make remarks about your ass as you walked past” (Leah, interview, October 16th 2001). As a retrospective summary of the neighbourhood has outlined:

“Fifth Avenue witnessed a proliferation of crime during the 1970s as a result of narcotic trafficking. The dangers associated with this problem nearly vacated the retail stores and residents between Sackett and Degraw Streets” (Merlis and Rosenzweig, 1999, p.13).

This is quite simply an extraordinary contrast to the “landscapes of consumption” (Carpenter and Lees, 1995), even “foodscapes” (Lees, 1996) being created at the same time by gentrification only two avenues away.

Following a brief lull in gentrification during the financial crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s, there has been a remarkable resurgence of reinvestment in Upper

³³ Nowhere was this more glaring than in the evaporation of all large industries along the Gowanus Canal, something which has been attributed to the emergence of containerised shipping in the 1970s (Jackson and Manbeck, 1998, p.138).

Park Slope which can be treated as symptomatic of the post-recession ‘third-wave’ of gentrification identified by other scholars (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Hackworth, 2001, 2002; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). The personality of gentrification has changed in tandem with the internationalisation of real estate and financial markets, and Lees (2000) has outlined these changes as follows:

“[G]entrifiers in Park Slope today are significantly wealthier than gentrifiers in the past. Sweat equity is not a prominent feature of the process today. Indeed, contemporary gentrifiers have to be wealthier than ever before because average prices for single-family townhouses have *doubled* since 1997..... This rapid appreciation is linked to the dramatically increased value of the New York stock market and the financial services industry, whose profits have (re)lubricated gentrification in New York City” (p.397-8).

In sum, a booming real estate market coupled with the extraordinary salaries that can be made in the New York corporate world have led to what Lees has termed the ‘super-gentrification’ of Upper Park Slope and also Brooklyn Heights – both of which are neighbourhoods where gentrification had matured during the 1980s. Hackworth (2001) has called these mature zones experiencing super-gentrification the ‘reinvested core’ and is correct to argue that

“property markets have recovered and become even more exclusive than before. It has, as a consequence, become virtually impossible to find affordable housing in Lower Manhattan and northeastern Brooklyn” (p. 875).

Hackworth crystallises this new form of gentrification in the following terms:

“The nature of gentrification...could reflect the wider integration of property and finance capital. It is being initiated not by risk-taking owner-occupiers who want to rehabilitate the neighborhood’s brownstones for personal use (the predominant mode of gentrification during the 1970s and 1980s) but by more globally linked corporate brokerage firms such as the Corcoran Group” (ibid. p.878-9).

The Corcoran Group’s own data on Park Slope’s changing property sales market since 1996, presented in Table 11, provides an interesting illustration of super-gentrification.

Table 11: Average sales prices (in US dollars) of homes and condominiums in Park Slope, 1996 to 2001. Source: Corcoran Group, Annual Brooklyn Reports, 1996-2001.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Single family home	298,730	292,710	393,170	633,500	671,729	970,000
2-4 family home	304,260	298,430	390,150	582,500	558,384	665,000
Condominium	162,250	159,890	162,480	235,950	276,015	303,000

The sales prices of 2-4 family homes and condominiums have doubled since 1996, but we must be careful not to treat this data as entirely reliable, especially with respect to the inflated averages for single-family homes, as the 44% increase from 2000 in 2001 is likely to be based on the sale of only a handful of very expensive properties. However, I refrain here from using more reliable data from the US Census to show increasing property prices, as this would only show figures for two years a decade apart, 1990 and 2000 - not enough for a close illustration of super-gentrification, a very recent phenomenon. The Corcoran’s Group’s figures for the rental market in Park Slope (Table 12) are probably more reliable than their sales figures, given “the large number of rentals” they purport to deal with in the neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, it is not only sales figures that suggest super-gentrification, as average rental prices have nearly doubled since 1996.

Table 12: Average rental prices (in US dollars) for all property types in Park Slope, 1996 to 2001. Source: Corcoran Group, Annual Brooklyn Reports, 1996-2001.

Year	Average Rental Price
1996	1,134
1997	1,249
1998	1,544
1999	1,769
2000	1,906
2001	2,092

The figures offer an indication that the cumulative result of the “corporatization of gentrification” (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999, p.650) has been the rise of Park Slope from one of the elite residential communities of Brooklyn to one of most desirable neighbourhoods in the entire city, a symbol of New York’s (and Brooklyn’s) remarkable economic revival of the late 1990s.

5.2 Lower Park Slope: class, race and ‘overspill’ gentrification

“Recently, I was talking with one of the doormen on my block...I asked him where he lived.
‘Brooklyn,’ he said. ‘Park Slope.’
‘Where in Park Slope?’
‘Fourth Avenue and 23rd Street,’ he said.
‘That’s not Park Slope. That’s Sunset Park.’
‘No,’ he said. ‘They call it Park Slope now.’

Park Slope has now come to extend from Prospect Park, as a friend of mine says, ‘all the way to Egypt’”.

Vince Passaro, *New York Times Magazine*, 11th November 2001.

Even the most casual of observers would argue that this ‘extension’ of Park Slope was bound to happen. Sales and rental prices in recent years have become so prohibitively high through the wholesale super-gentrification of Upper Park Slope that the middle-classes are now finding that the only affordable accommodation is in the adjacent areas not subject to the rampant gentrification of the 1970s and 1980s.

The effect of super-gentrification can be compared to dropping a pebble into a brimful bucket of water – the pebble of New York’s remarkable economic recovery causes a disturbance to a previously stabilised (gentrified) neighbourhood, and the disturbance is manifested in a ripple-effect, in this case a third-wave of gentrification which spreads into outlying, non-gentrified areas. The term ‘overspill’ gentrification has been noted elsewhere (Dantas, 1988³⁴), and it is a useful image to apply to what has happened to many disinvested New York City neighbourhoods in this post-recession era (Hackworth, 2001, Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Those areas adjacent to Upper Park Slope which escaped the earlier rounds of gentrification are those to the west, further down the Slope, and to the south, towards the neighbourhoods of Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace. The borders of these “reservoirs of gentrification overflow” (*New York Magazine*, March 12th 2001, p.51) are somewhat interchangeable and also muddled by the redesignation of Park Slope into several sub-areas by real estate agents, to be discussed shortly. For the purposes of this study, I am concerned with Lower Park Slope, bordered by 6th Avenue to the east, 3rd Avenue to the west, the Prospect Expressway to the south, and a jagged border to the north (to coincide with chaotic census tract boundaries!) (Figure 9). An idea of what has been happening in recent years is encapsulated by a new settler in the neighbourhood³⁵, quoted in *New York Magazine*: “I looked in [Upper] Park Slope for a while, and then I suddenly realised, ‘I can buy a very expensive box here, or I can buy a house elsewhere’” (ibid. p.51).

Expanding the time scale back to 1980, Table 13 presents some indicators of the changing socio-economic profile of Lower Park Slope, compiled from the last three census returns. There has been a significant increase in median monthly gross rent, and the median value of an owner-occupied home has almost doubled since 1980. Higher educational attainment has almost doubled in the same time, as has the percentage of professionals living in the neighbourhood. While there has been a gentle decline of those employed in the finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE)

³⁴ Dantas was not entirely uncritical of the term ‘overspill’, arguing that it obscures quite different processes which occur in these outlying neighbourhoods. I agree with her, and will demonstrate the different processes occurring in Lower Park Slope, but I still find the term a useful explanatory tool in this context – unquestionably a major cause of Lower Park Slope’s gentrification is overspill through the real estate explosion.

³⁵ From this point onwards, ‘the neighbourhood’ refers to Lower Park Slope, even though many would dispute that it is a neighbourhood in its own right.

sector (somewhat surprisingly for a gentrifying area), the increase in professionals suggests that doctors, lawyers, journalists, and skilled technicians (to name just a few examples) have all been settling in Lower Park Slope. This accounts for the significant local increase in median household income, which has *trebled* since 1980.

Table 13: The Changing Socio-Economic Profile of Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000.

Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

	1980	1990	2000
Total Number of Housing Units	14022	13583	14919
Median Household Income (US dollars)	14923	28976	42500
Median Monthly Gross Rent (US dollars)	211	563	816
Median Owner-Occupied Home Value (US dollars)	189002	249436	344854
Percentage of Residents over 25 with Bachelor’s Degree	12.5	17.1	22.2
Percentage of FIRE Sector Workers	12.4	11.6	10.1
Percentage of Professional and Related Service Workers	20.7	30.6	38.1

One of the more interesting developments to take place in the 1990s was the sudden erosion of one Park Slope in favour of many different kinds of ‘Slope’. Indeed, it may not have been possible a decade ago to speak of ‘Lower Park Slope’, as a large chunk of it was not considered part of the Park Slope which had gentrified so intensely in the 1970s and 1980s, and indeed many people still think of, and indeed negatively stereotype, this chunk as the neighbourhood of ‘Gowanus’. As gentrification returned following the early 1990s recession and spread further down the hill to the area under investigation in this thesis, the real estate industry were quick to chop up Park Slope into many different sub-areas entirely based on price and prestige rather than character and socio-cultural profile. Some long-term residents are angry at how the real estate industry in the neighbourhood has redefined its boundaries:

“Oh my God, it’s like the whole of Brooklyn is becoming Park Slope! I mean, Sunset Park and Prospect Heights are like suburbs of Park Slope, and anything below 5th Avenue, which used to be totally working class, now has houses going for 500,000 dollars! It’s just ridiculous! And you see all these signs saying ‘South Slope, Center Slope’, which is totally due to real estate agencies wanting to

attract new buyers for buildings. When I was a girl it was like, the Slope is the Slope, and it starts at the Park and ends at 5th Avenue. It's only in the last five years that things have really changed. I'm not even sure which piece of the Slope I live in now, in fact I don't really care – it's just Park Slope to me, and it always will be" (Louisa, interview, 1st November 2001).

Other residents who have invested in the area are delighted with the good returns from their investments because of the subdivisions:

"When I first moved here and told people that I lived in Park Slope, they said 'You don't live in Park Slope!', as 3rd Avenue was so utterly different to the crowd further up the hill. That's all changed in like, five years, I think because the real estate people splitting up the neighbourhood as a way of attracting buyers like me. Now you've got Prime Slope, Center Slope, South Slope, and here, Lower Slope. Today, when I say where I live, it most certainly is 'the Slope', which was not the case when I first got here. I can't really complain about it though, because it's definitely bumped up the value of my property" (Larry, interview, 24th October 2001).

When this comment is considered alongside that of a realtor I interviewed about this very issue, one can see that the idea behind the subdivision, like Larry's experience suggests, was to boost real estate profits by luring new investors into the area:

"I'm not sure how it all got started. I guess it's one of those things where every realtor knows the business practices of another, and clearly whoever was behind it was onto something as we all started saying 'Prime Slope', 'South Slope' and 'Blah Blah Blah Slope' about six or seven years ago".

TS: "Has it worked? Do you think you have generated more business because of it?"

"Oh no question about it. When people come and check out the neighbourhood they find a very large and pretty diverse area, both population-wise and property-wise. What our industry did after the recession was split it all up to make it easier for buyers to decide where they wanted to live, and what they could afford. Like Prime Slope, let's face facts, you're not going to be able to buy much property there unless you are basically a millionaire, and South Slope or Lower Slope, well, those are the up-and-coming areas which we always recommend to first-time buyers, or dual-earner couples, young professionals with money to invest, that kind of thing. I'm pretty sure it's helped people buy, and made them more confident about their investment" (Realtor, interview, 25th November 2001).

For those who have known the neighbourhood for generations, these comments and practices will not change what they see as true 'Park Slope', but they are very likely to change the attitudes of people who don't know the neighbourhood. Once the word

'Slope' is added to an advertised property, a potential buyer will likely consider what they do know about Park Slope (i.e. one of the more desirable neighbourhoods in New York City) and gain the confidence they need to follow through with their investment - even if they end up buying property away from what people who know the area consider to be Park Slope proper! While difficult to prove, many of my interviewees suspected that the redesignation of Park Slope by the real estate industry is a significant factor behind intensifying overspill gentrification.

5.2.1 Differing attachments to place: Lower Park Slope feared and celebrated

Lower Park Slope's current gentrification is certainly a remarkable turnaround from its aforementioned economic malaise in the 1970s and 1980s. Several interviews conducted with people familiar with the 5th Avenue strip during those decades demonstrated how much things have changed in recent years, and their words provide more evidence of the social problems accompanying disinvestment in Lower Park Slope. Fear of crime and in particular a crack house in the heart of the area became a central theme in the recollections of many interviewees:

"If someone had told me in 1977, when I moved to the Slope, that 5th Avenue would one day have trendy bars and restaurants and expensive cars parked on the streets [see Plate 17], I would have laughed in their face! Things had gotten so bad back then that we formed a block association on President Street to get rid of a crack house on the corner. I'd never walk in that area without company, and besides, you never really needed to as 7th Avenue was the up and coming street" (Cathy, interview, 23rd October 2001).

"In the '80s one of my closest friends lived in the neighbourhood. Whenever I would call and say I am coming to visit, she would say 'don't take 5th Avenue!'. It was mostly boarded up, vacant and desolate, with drug dealers hanging out on the corner. There was a sense of menace which you wouldn't get further up the hill towards 7th Avenue, and I do remember feeling a sense of relief when I got to my friend's place without being accosted" (Scott, interview, 17th November 2001).

"I didn't come down the hill very often as a kid. It wasn't very safe, and it was very deserted. There were few bodegas [corner stores], certainly no good restaurants, and it had a kind of downward feel about it. There was a crack house on President Street that was well known as a place to avoid, and that made the neighbourhood pretty unsafe. There were hookers on Degraw Street, and I remember being told by my mom to avoid certain places, you know, as a teenage girl it wasn't really safe" (Stacey, interview, 3rd December 2001).

"I guess in the early '80s, the neighbourhood where we are right now was about as different you can imagine. If you were middle-class, you wouldn't come down here unless you were either a trouble maker or looking for trouble. Like on President and 5th, there was this crack house where apparently you would give some money to the guy on the door, he would then call up to the guys on the second floor, and they would throw the drugs and god knows what else down to you. There were no cops, and just a lot people shooting up [drugs] and getting high" (Jeremy, interview, December 21st 2001).

Notwithstanding these comments, it would be a serious misrepresentation to portray Lower Park Slope as an arena of outright misery and suffering during this period. The views expressed above were from middle-class (non-Hispanic) whites, but further qualitative accounts of the neighbourhood during this era provide a crisper, more nuanced version of a place that offered very different experiences of urban life for very different people; in this case, along the lines of class, experienced through ethnicity. While times were tough and nobody denied the crime and drug problems of the era, working-class Hispanic residents offered contrasting views of the neighbourhood as a community, where attachments to place were strong and social ties strengthened through solidarity and shared religious and cultural beliefs. In its time of disinvestment, where it seemed deeply feared by the white middle class, the neighbourhood was by contrast deeply valued by many Hispanic interviewees:

"It was much more of a neighbourhood than it is now. You saw many more familiar faces, and people tended to look out for each other. There were some places where you would have to watch your back, like near the crack house, but my street, Union, was a place where you didn't have to worry because if someone gave you any trouble about 10 people were always out on their stoops³⁶ watching what was going on. Another thing is that when a new family moved in, it was a major event and everybody knew about it. These days you can't tell who is new and who isn't, as everyone moves around so much more" (Luis, interview, 6th November 2001).

"You would see the same people on the street day after day, and they would look out for you. One night when I was about 15 I got attacked outside this pizza place, and everyone stopped what they were doing when they heard me yelling and came out to help me. I really doubt that would happen now because no one has a freaking clue who is who, and people don't hang out on the street anymore.

³⁶ A stoop, derived from the Dutch word 'stoep' (step), is a staircase leading to the front door on the first floor of a residential building. A feature of New York's 'walk-up' rowhouses, they "have had an important real and symbolic role in New York's street and neighbourhood life....used for sitting and socializing with neighbours, as a place to escape the steaming tenements in the summer, and as a perch to watch the passing scene" (Allen, 1993, p.29). The neighbourhood has 'stoop sales' in the warmer months, where residents sell bric-a-brac and furniture to passers-by.

Last week somebody stole my bike, right in front of a bar on 5th where there were doormen, and nobody did a thing, you know? Like, what's going on here now? I don't get it!" (Rosario, interview, 11th October 2001).

"Looking back I do remember recognising more people as I walked along the streets, stopping to talk with those folks I knew by name, that kind of thing. That still happens from time to time, but the only place where you get any sense of community these days is the church, or things which the church organise. I'm sure it's the same for a lot of these neighbourhoods which have gone upmarket, as people who move in today don't have time for the community, so it kind of breaks up into little pieces, and your family or your church become your community" (Jennifer, interview, 15th November 2001).

The point of these anecdotes is not to set up some kind of binary opposition between non-Hispanic white middle-class and Hispanic working-class, as the small sample cannot possibly lead to the conclusion that Lower Park Slope was unanimously feared by the former and cherished by the latter. The purpose, rather, is to point out that perceptions and experiences of this neighbourhood during its most economically and socially troubled decades were by no means uniform. From my interviews there was a distinct pattern of difference, in that many more interviewees with positive memories of these decades were of Hispanic descent, and working-class – a major factor in the current attitudes towards (and efforts to resist) gentrification, which aim to prevent a complete reversal of the yesteryear character of the neighbourhood. A discussion of differing neighbourhood sentiments based on ethnicity necessitates the introduction of the changing demographic profile of Lower Park Slope³⁷, before exploring the intersection between ethnicity, class and gentrification in more detail.

5.2.2 The changing ethnic/racial character of Lower Park Slope

The total population of the neighbourhood since 1980 (Table 14) differs from the trend experienced by Brooklyn and the city as a whole, in that between 1980 and 1990 it steadily lost population in contrast to wider growth elsewhere, but the 1990s have seen a recovery to a figure approaching that of 1980. This reflects something already explained earlier, in that Lower Park Slope was not subject to the 'revival' and repopulation of other inner-city New York neighbourhoods during the 1980s,

³⁷ The figures which follow are calculated from the 13 census tracts of Lower Park Slope.

and it is only recently, in the 1990s, that more people have settled in the neighbourhood.

Table 14: Total Population of Lower Park Slope, Brooklyn and New York City, 1980-2000. Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Year	Lower Park Slope	Brooklyn	New York City
1980	34,549	2,230,936	7,071,639
1990	31,827	2,300,664	7,322,564
2000	33,940	2,465,326	8,008,278

A glance at Lower Park Slope’s population in more detail (Table 15) shows the interesting pattern of its changing ethnic composition during these decades. In 1980, nearly half of the population (44.9%) was of Hispanic origin, yet in the two ensuing decades this population has declined to just over a third (35.4%).

Table 15: Percentages of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic residents in Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000. Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Year	Hispanic origin	Non-Hispanic origin
1980	44.9%	55.1%
1990	39.5%	60.5%
2000	35.4%	64.6%

The reasons behind this decline are worthy of a separate research project examining the forces behind ethnic transformation in Brooklyn neighbourhoods; here I can only speculate as to the reasons behind these changes. This requires attention to the Hispanic and non-Hispanic percentages in further detail (Table 16).

Table 16: Ethnic Origin of Hispanic and Non-Hispanic residents in Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000. Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

	1980	1990	2000
Non-Hispanic:	55.1%	60.5%	64.6%
White	36.8%	39.5%	40.8%
Black	15.6%	16.5%	14.8%
American Indian	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander ³⁸	n/a	3.9%	5.0%
Other Race	2.5%	0.3%	0.6%
Two or More Races ³⁹	n/a	n/a	3.3%
Hispanic:	44.9%	39.5%	35.4%
White	21.6%	16.1%	13.1%
Black	1.9%	4.0%	2.0%
American Indian	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	n/a	0.4%	0.2%
Other Race	21.2%	18.8%	17.0%
Two or More Races	n/a	n/a	2.6

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant pattern exhibited by this data is the contrast with what has been happening in New York City over the past 20 years. During this time, the city as a whole has seen a continuing net out-migration of whites (which began in the 1950s), and a significant inflow of immigrants - a pattern especially evident in Brooklyn and the Bronx (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Lobo, Salvo and Virgin, 1996; Lobo, Flores and Salvo, 2002). In 1980, non-Hispanic whites comprised 52.0% of the city's population, but by 2000 that figure had dropped to 35.1% (Source: US Census). In 1980, people of Hispanic origin constituted 19.7% of the city's population, but by 2000 that figure had increased to 26.9% (ibid.). Note from Table 16 how Lower Park Slope exhibits a very different trend, in that it has been

³⁸ This separate category was introduced in 1990.

³⁹ The 2000 Census was the first to give respondents a chance to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial category

gaining in non-Hispanic whites and experiencing a *decrease* in the number of Hispanics of all ethnic origins. If we move to the smaller scale of the block group, and map ethnic transformation in Lower Park Slope from 1990-2000, the decline in the Hispanic population is much clearer (Figure 10). Of the 39 block groups surveyed, only 7 recorded an increase in the percentage of Hispanics during this period, and of the 32 block groups which recorded a decrease, 7 experienced a decrease of over 10%. Note also the very interesting geographical trend revealed by this map – Hispanic decreases are especially concentrated towards the east of the neighbourhood, where property prices tend to be higher due to proximity to gentrified Upper Park Slope.

From these data, we can speculate that gentrification in Lower Park Slope has had a significant impact on local ethnic transition through an influx of white gentrifiers displacing Hispanic (and to a lesser extent black) residents. While more sophisticated quantitative measures of gentrification are needed to confirm this (not something within the scope of this thesis), there can be little question that the neighbourhood as a whole is becoming ‘whiter’, and several of my interviewees of different ethnic backgrounds referred to gentrification in the form of the “whiting-out⁴⁰” of the neighbourhood. More evidence is supplied by Lobo, Flores and Salvo (2002), who undertook a broad survey of Hispanic growth between 1970 and 1990 in all census tracts with a total population over 100 in New York City. They created a typology of tracts that “took into account the relative strength of the race/Hispanic groups” (p.709) - for the quotation which follows, clarification of three types is necessary:

- ‘Hispanic white’ - where Hispanics and whites were 25% or more of the tract population.
- ‘melting-pot’ - where Hispanics with at least two other groups were at least 20% of the tract population.
- ‘dominant Hispanic’ - where Hispanics constituted over 50% of the tract population.

Here is their important observation:

⁴⁰ My sister, who has lived in the neighbourhood since 1997, told me about a bar on 5th Avenue which she and her friends jokingly refer to as ‘The White Bar’, as they have not seen one non-white customer in there since it opened in 1998!

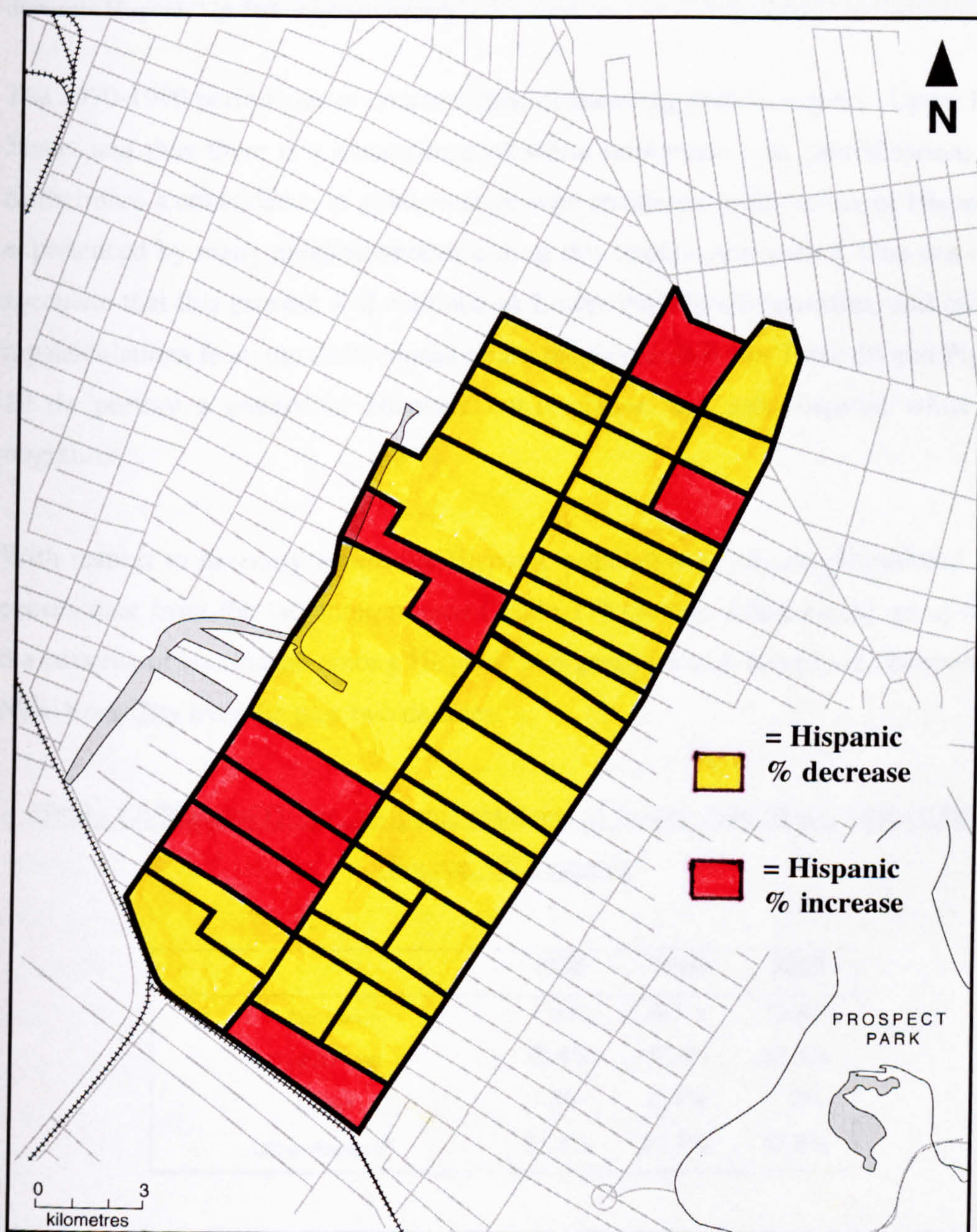


Figure 10: The decrease in the Hispanic population of Lower Park Slope, 1990-2000, by block group. Source: US Censuses of Population, 1990 and 2000.

“Many census tracts that were already Hispanic in 1970 also transitioned by 1990. This was especially true of Hispanic-white and melting pot neighbourhoods, which saw enormous change, reflecting in great part the loss of whites and the growth of Hispanics. Only one-in-five of the 119 Hispanic-white tracts remained the same, *primarily in Park Slope in Brooklyn*, whereas 42% turned dominant Hispanic” (p.710, emphasis added).

The 1970-1990 period was of course a time of maturing gentrification in Upper Park Slope, and thus there is a coincidence of white settlement with gentrification, and furthermore a coincidence of gentrification with resistance to the influx of Hispanics experienced by many neighbourhoods during this twenty-year period. One can only speculate that this process will continue as Lower Park Slope gentrifies, and indeed my calculations from the 2000 census return displayed above in Table 16 and Figure 10 do portray a pattern of Hispanic out-migration and non-Hispanic white in-migration.

With respect to diversity *within* the Hispanic population of the neighbourhood, the census data from the last three returns (Table 17) provide a fascinating glimpse of the patterns of succession among Hispanic sub-groups which have been observed in New York City over the past two decades:

Table 17: Place of Origin, Hispanic residents of Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000

(Source: US Census).

	1980	1990	2000
Mexican	1.1%	4.7%	13.8%
Puerto Rican	76.4%	67.8%	51.4%
Cuban	1.3%	2.4%	1.9%
Other Hispanic ⁴¹	21.2%	25.1%	32.9%

Puerto Rican immigration to New York City from the 1940s to 1960s was responsible for the establishment of a strong Hispanic presence in the city (Winnick, 1990), and the legacy of this immigration can be seen in the fact that over three quarters of the Hispanic population of Lower Park Slope in 1980 were of Puerto

⁴¹ I have neglected to include more detail here for the purposes of comparison – only the Summary Tape File of the 2000 census has significant detail within this category.

Rican descent. In the late 1960s, changes to the U.S. immigration laws saw the arrival of legions of Central and South American immigrants in New York City, particularly Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Mexicans and Columbians (and also black Caribbeans and Asians) (Winnick, 1990; Lobo, Salvo and Virgin, 1996). Recent decades have been characterised by remarkable growth of Dominican communities⁴² in the city - Dominicans, who account for a large chunk of the percentage of 'Other Hispanic' in Table 17, are now the city's largest immigrant group (Lobo, Flores and Salvo, 2002, p.707).

Particularly noticeable from Table 17 are the profound changes of the origin of Hispanic residents in Lower Park Slope since 1980. Abu-Lughod (1999 p.299) has pointed out that there has been a "progressive decentralization" of Puerto Ricans from Manhattan to the outer boroughs since 1960 – it should be noted that this decentralization has been very uneven in geographical distribution, with significant and increasing concentrations in poorer, segregated neighbourhoods such as the South Bronx, Bushwick and East New York, but smaller and recently decreasing concentrations in neighbourhoods experiencing reinvestment (Lobo, Flores and Salvo, 2002, p.717). While the Puerto Rican subgroup continues to be the largest in Lower Park Slope, it has shrunk substantially, by exactly 25 percent since 1980, which is perhaps a reflection not of decentralization from Manhattan, but of the "continued net out-migration of Puerto Ricans from the city, a process which first started in the 1970s" (ibid. p.719). Succession among Hispanic subgroups is a relatively recent phenomenon (ibid. p.720-1) captured in one neighbourhood by the data in this table. There has been a profound increase in the size of the Mexican subgroup, not to mention the 'Other Hispanic' subgroup which includes large numbers of Dominicans, Columbians and Ecuadorians. Together, these subgroups appear to be on the way to succeeding the Puerto Ricans of Lower Park Slope. Mexicans have been settling in large numbers in the formerly Puerto Rican stronghold of Sunset Park⁴³, just south of Lower Park Slope, so perhaps we are witnessing another, different kind of 'overspill', as Mexicans who for one reason or another cannot settle in Sunset Park find residence in Lower Park Slope instead.

⁴² Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan exhibits the largest concentration of Dominicans in the city.

⁴³ The number of Mexicans in Sunset Park quadrupled to 12000 between 1990 and 2000 (Lobo, Flores and Salvo, 2002, p.720).

The relevance of this descriptive data to this investigation lies in the fact that while the proportion of Hispanic residents in Lower Park Slope has been decreasing since 1980, there have been some important and substantial changes *within* that diverse proportion, with a discernible path towards succession of Puerto Ricans by newer Hispanic subgroups, and thus a continuing transformation of ethnically differentiated Hispanic identity within the neighbourhood. Whether social ties among Hispanics have weakened with these changes is open to debate, and something which perhaps could only be answered by an intensive ethnographic investigation. The important demographic aspect of Lower Park Slope to bear in mind as this discussion progresses is that the Hispanic 'community' is changing at the same time as the neighbourhood is changing through gentrification, leading to a complete reorganization of both physical *and* social space at a much more complex level than the model of class transformation which many earlier studies and definitions of gentrification have attempted to expose. This is not to say that there have been no thorough investigations into the intersection of class, ethnicity and gentrification (e.g. Schaffer and Smith, 1986; Anderson, 1990; Taylor, 1992; Mele, 2000b), but I believe that academic understanding of this intersection is nothing like as advanced as our understanding of the intersection between class, gender and gentrification (Rose, 1984, 1989; Bondi, 1991, 1999b; Warde, 1991; Butler and Hamnett, 1994; Butler, 1997). It is now time to undertake the difficult task of explaining the intersection between class, ethnicity and gentrification in Lower Park Slope, using the helpful concept of 'social tectonics' to frame the discussion.

5.2.3 Social tectonics in Lower Park Slope

In Chapter 4 I introduced Robson and Butler's (2001; see also Butler and Robson, 2001) concept of 'social tectonics' in an attempt to explain the social consequences of gentrification in South Parkdale, and I argued that the parallel 'social plates' were characterised largely by differences in housing tenure and income, with the extra factor of a misunderstanding of mental illness being a powerful motor behind the tectonic situation. My interviews with many different residents in Lower Park Slope suggest that this neighbourhood also exhibits social tectonics, and perhaps more akin to the mechanism conceptualised by Robson and Butler because of less social

interaction between different social groups, rather than the more 'interactive' tectonic structure of South Parkdale. This was especially evident during those interviews where the topic of race/ethnicity was at the forefront of a discussion on the effects of gentrification. It is important to recall that Robson and Butler identified social tectonics in Brixton – a gentrifying London neighbourhood with its own history of ethnic tensions – and pointed out that “relations between different social *and ethnic* groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves” (p.77-8, emphasis added). While the historical and geographical context of Brixton is of course very different, a selection of poignant anecdotes from Lower Park Slope offers some evidence that the concept of social tectonics, in its strictest sense, is very applicable to this neighbourhood. Take for example the comments of Mark, a non-Hispanic white computer programmer who moved with a group of colleagues (also non-Hispanic white) to Lower Park Slope from Manhattan in 1999:

“There is a certain resentment that comes from being ‘new kids on the block’. Like the other day, I was in a diner and this old Latino woman started talking to me, and said pretty spitefully ‘you’re one of the new people, son’, as if I didn’t have a right to say anything about this place. Also, when we moved in, we kind of got these looks from our neighbours, who are also Latino, it was like who the hell are we, and what are we doing here. So I guess there isn’t much neighbourliness, which is disappointing, and I wonder if it’s because we are a bunch of single white guys and we kind of stand out on a Latino family block” (Mark, interview, 18th October 2001).

Gloria, who settled in Lower Park Slope in 1992 after emigrating from Columbia with her husband, is unsettled by what she sees as white gentrifier threats to a Hispanic presence:

“I resent the younger people who are moving in, the ones who have way more money from whatever Manhattan thing they are doing, and the ones who would rather see a wine bar than a community bakery. They just don’t care about the neighbourhood, it’s just where they sleep, and all they want is a Starbucks to nurse their hangover in on the weekend. The young people who move in here are just ‘whiting-out’ the Slope, changing the diversity which a lot of us who have been here for a long time want to protect” (Gloria, interview, 27th November 2001).

Nica, a third-generation Puerto Rican-American who has lived in Lower Park Slope all her life, was equally unsettled:

“It’s really in the last three years that I have noticed incredible changes to Fifth Avenue. These boutiques and wine bars keep appearing. Look inside each one and you’ll never see people in them who have lived here for longer than 10 years – and I’ll tell you one thing, they ain’t Puerto Rican, that’s for sure. I went away for six months in 1999, and when I got back I was like, ‘who the hell are all these weird white people in my neighbourhood?’ It was crazy!” (Nica, interview, 5th December 2001).

The comments of these three residents, when considered either individually or as a collective, lend much credence to the idea that social tectonics, as Robson and Butler (2001) point out with a hint of sarcasm, does “not make for an especially cosy settlement” (p.78), and in this different context I was also struck by the “palpable tensions” which Robson and Butler argue are caused by little interaction between different social and ethnic groups. In the context of Lower Park Slope, however, there is more that characterises Butler and Robson’s ‘parallel social plates’ than simply ethnicity. When the added complexity of class is thrown into the picture, as it must be in an account of gentrification, the white non-Hispanic versus Hispanic binary is unsettled, and destabilized into something much more complex. There is far more substance to the story of this neighbourhood than the case of one ethnic group being marginalized by another, as long-time resident Susan, a nurse at a large hospital in the neighbourhood, pointed out to me:

“I think the real problem is the fact that the so-called yuppies who are moving in are completely oblivious to what is going on in this neighbourhood. They are not thinking about who was here before, who they might be affecting, or what it means to contribute to a community. It’s not that they are trying to displace anyone or take over the neighbourhood consciously, but that they simply don’t care who or what is around them. This is why you see all this graffiti around saying ‘Yuppie Go Home’. I see them as cries from the Hispanic working class saying ‘hey, we’re here too!’. I think that’s one of the huge problems with gentrification, is that people don’t know that they are doing it. This isn’t really a neighbourhood to them, it’s just real estate or a great apartment near Manhattan, and they simply don’t hear the voices of the people they live around when they settle here”.

TS – “Do you see the problem as one of class tensions, or ethnic tensions?”

“Both. If everyone had the same resources, I don’t think there would be much tension, and certainly no gentrification! This isn’t the 1960s anymore, I think America has pretty much moved on from large-scale prejudice based on skin colour or ethnic background. But I think the problem around here

is that middle-class people, the gentrifiers, are mostly white, and the working-class people who get displaced are Hispanic. *So gentrification kind of brings up those tensions again*, and makes race an issue again, when it really is more to do with inequality". (Susan, interview, 12th December 2001, emphasis added).

Susan's telling assessment is insightful because it demonstrates how class in Lower Park Slope is, in the words of Stuart Hall, largely 'experienced *through* race [and/or ethnicity]' (quoted in Jackson, 1989, p.152) and that gentrification is a process which surfaces old or submerged tensions through turf battles and ambivalent attachments to place. When considering what Jackson (1989) calls the "problem...[of] how best to deal with the multiple ways in which questions of class intersect with those of 'race' in the competition for scarce resources such as housing" (p.151), I am drawn to the work of Kay Anderson (1998), who has done much to illustrate "the complex entanglements of race and class" (p.219) and to move beyond the dualistic 'us/them' conceptions behind a body of work in cultural geography which she calls "a cultural politics of race polarity" (p.205). In an article that is as provocative as it is insightful, Anderson uses the examples of New York City's Chinatown and Sydney's Aboriginal Redfern district to explain that there is much more occurring in these neighbourhoods than simply "stale scenarios of otherness and marginality" (p.220). Class and race are not seen as isolated forces of differentiation – they are seen as key determinants of social relations that collide and intertwine in the urban sphere, and both Chinatown and Redfern exhibit "the complexities where race and class *costructure* society and space" (p.214, my emphasis), not one or the other, nor one more than the other. For Anderson, race cannot be reduced to class, and class cannot be reduced to race. Further evidence of such costructuring in Lower Park Slope is offered by Merella, an assistant store manager, who laments the changes she has seen over the last few years:

"Gentrification is like this big homogenising force. The Park Slope gentrifiers think that New York is their shopping mall. I hate them. I know it's xenophobic, but they are ruining the place where I grew up, and all under this clean-up kick that [former Mayor] Giuliani started. But the improvements are never for the working-class people who live here already, they are for people moving in, basically white folks with more money to spend. I'm like, hey, we were here first, how dare you come in with your stupid cutesy card store and your fifteen dollar pasta dishes. It's just not right that one group of people replace another like this". (Merella, interview, 19th October 2001).

Contrast Merella's comments with those of Justin, an accountant in a large insurance corporation who moved to the neighbourhood in 1996 because he "couldn't afford a place in Manhattan":

"It's amazing what has happened here. In like, 18 months, Fifth Avenue has just exploded. You've got great restaurants, bars and decent antique shops, mainly because everyone's been moving out of Manhattan as it's too expensive there. Where before it was all boarded up and vacant, now it's a great place to hang out, and my friends who don't know the neighbourhood are really surprised when they get here and find that instead of being like Sunset Park and full of crappy bodegas⁴⁴ it's like Chelsea or the East Village" (Justin, interview, 30th November 2001).

Where Merella views the neighbourhood changes with dismay and negativity, Justin views them as positive and 'amazing'. By a negative reference to Sunset Park, one of the largest Hispanic communities in New York City, and by drawing an equivalence with the gentrified neighbourhoods of Chelsea and the East Village, Justin communicates his sense that Lower Park Slope's transformation is a good thing, with a 'better' class of person moving in. Both Merella and Justin's comments on the class transformations become more powerful when it is revealed that Merella comes from a Dominican family who have lived in the neighbourhood since 1984, whereas Justin is of Anglo-Irish descent and grew up in Connecticut. Social tectonics are thus activated and reinforced by what Elijah Anderson (1990) has referred to as "a profound confusion of race and class concerning the local culture" (p.156). The confusion (perhaps *conflation* is a better word), is evident in both the quotations above, in Merella's 'white folks with more money' and Justin's '[Hispanic] Sunset Park and full of crappy bodegas'. With comments such as these, it is not difficult to discern the simmering tensions in Lower Park Slope which are generated along axes, or in the case of social tectonics, faultlines, of class and racial difference. In sum, the thrust of this empirically validated discussion lends much support to Solomos and Back's (1995) claim that the question of how social relations of class and ethnicity interact in everyday social processes (in this case, gentrification) "cannot be adequately analysed without a detailed *account* of everyday processes both nationally and locally" (p.40, emphasis added).

⁴⁴ A bodega is a general store selling everything from newspapers and candy/drink to household accessories.

It is not only through interview data that one can view the faultlines of social tectonics. Further qualitative evidence in the form of landscape interpretation projects a strong sense of a neighbourhood currently grappling with the sometimes overwhelming forces of change which have leaked through its borders since the early 1990s recession. In July to December 2001 nowhere was this more evident than in a walk around the streets which were subject to public works (in the form of underground sewer improvements) during the whole of 2001. Concrete slabs used during the works to protect the engineers from the traffic along both 5th Avenue and Union Street became dotted with graffiti protesting against the emergence of yuppies and against landlords profiteering from gentrification. Plates 18 to 21 show some of the more poignant protests, ranging from the polite “NO MORE YUPPIES PLEASE! THANK YOU” (Plate 18) to the reactionary “YUPPIE GO HOME” (Plate 19) and “JAIL A GREEDY LANDLORD TODAY” (Plate 20) to the threateningly misspelled “DIE YUPIE” (Plate 21). How might we read these messages? An impressive geographical treatment of the meaning of graffiti in urban space, specifically New York City, has come from the pen of Cresswell (1992), who argued that while the ‘problem’ of graffiti is usually constructed in both political and media rhetoric as ‘out of place’, part of a ‘discourse of disorder’ which is then ‘put in place’ in New York’s art galleries, the *act* of graffiti is much more about “how ideas about what is right, just, and appropriate are transmitted through space and place” (p.329). For Cresswell, the story of graffiti in New York City is

“a set of relationships between transgression, reactions to transgression, commonsense, and the meaning of place.Along with this transgression is an alleged transformation (or threatened transformation) of the meaning of a place (New York). Put another way the transgression threatens to bring about a meaning of place which is not favored by those involved in creating the discourse of reaction” (p.343).

The graffiti captured in Plates 18 to 21 show Lower Park Slope to be contested along the lines of class, and in this context it is transgressive because it shows that the tide of gentrification is not unilaterally welcomed by those who are already in the neighbourhood. Through its appearance on the materials being used to improve the streets, the meaning of gentrification is changed from one of physical improvement to one of social competition. The plates of social tectonics are thus jolted by graffiti,

where yuppies and landlords change from neighbourhood saviours to neighbourhood villains in a pronounced class confrontation.

Another yet very different kind of class confrontation to take place during my research time in the neighbourhood was over the establishment of a halfway house for ex-offenders recently released from prison, in a vacant City-owned building on Pacific Street between 4th Avenue and Flatbush Avenue (Plate 22), an area of Lower Park Slope arguably undergoing the most intense reinvestment. A non-profit community group, the Fifth Avenue Committee (to be discussed in detail later in this chapter), put forward a proposal to the City's Community Board 6 (the administrative body for Park Slope and the adjoining neighbourhoods of Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Street District and Red Hook) that would create 10 units of supportive, transitional and affordable housing for ex-offenders returning to the neighbourhood. At a public meeting to debate the proposal held in early October, some residents from the block containing the building and from adjacent blocks joined in protest against the halfway house. In recent memory, the house in question had allegedly been "a den of iniquity – a flophouse for drug users and vandals – a blight for those trying to make a home on the block" (Buiso, 2001), and the residents opposed to the halfway house were concerned that populating it with ex-offenders would ensure a reversal of the ascending fortunes of the block – and neighbourhood. Over 70 people signed a petition calling for the city to sell the property to a private entity, which would convert it into "a two-family housing unit to house decent, law-abiding people" (Buiso, 2001).

Aside from the rather questionable language used in the somewhat biased media coverage of this debate, one of the more interesting aspects of the protest was the characteristics of the protesters. This was not a standard battle between middle-class gentrifiers and working-class advocates, for many of the people opposed to the halfway house were working class. In what might be read as a deviation from the usual source of 'nimby' attitudes, single mothers, pensioners on fixed incomes and unemployed tenants were against the appearance of ex-offenders on their block or in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, many of the people who expressed support for the project at the meeting were middle-class residents from surrounding blocks. The case of the halfway house on Pacific Street, which was eventually approved by

Community Board 6, much to the disgust of those who opposed it (Gallahue, 2001), demonstrates two important aspects of Lower Park Slope's gentrification. First, while most working-class residents are no doubt fearful of gentrification, many would not like to see both individual streets (and ultimately the neighbourhood) return to their 1970s and 1980s condition of sporadic criminal activity, and second, class conflicts in this gentrifying neighbourhood take place at different levels and with different intensity depending on the issue at stake. By aligning themselves with the interests of the private market instead of the Fifth Avenue Committee, the working class residents who opposed the halfway house were encouraging the gentrification of this section of the neighbourhood – and it would be gentrification in the most classical sense in that an abandoned building would experience reinvestment under the auspices of the City and the developer. Equally as interesting, by aligning themselves with the Fifth Avenue Committee, middle-class gentrifiers may not experience the level of neighbourhood 'improvements' that most academic treatments of gentrification suggest the middle-class yearn for.

This section has demonstrated that both variables of class and race are deeply complex, and in gentrifying Lower Park Slope they often intertwine to costructure *and* transform space into a place with contested meanings and values. It is thus a place which is difficult for an outside observer to understand, and some attention to the housing policy and economic condition behind the situation is now useful if we are to understand why there are winners and losers in the struggle over the direction of (re)development in Lower Park Slope.

5.3 Rent regulation and the affordable housing crisis in New York City

"Economists used to blame rent control for this kind of housing disaster [the lack of affordable housing], and New York was often offered as the prime example. But as it turns out, what's happening in Park Slope and other once-affordable neighbourhoods around the city is something else altogether. Government interference does not seem to be causing New York's tight housing market. On the contrary, *insufficient* government regulation and participation appear to be a large part of the problem" (Phillips-Fein, 2000, p.26).

While much attention is given in both popular and academic accounts of New York City's housing to the dearth of affordable rental accommodation in the city, it must

be recognised that there have in fact been a series of policy initiatives designed to improve the housing status of lower-income tenants in New York City since World War II. As van Ryzin and Kamber (2002) point out, the city actually possesses a larger proportion of government subsidised and regulated housing than most other U.S. cities, with approximately 2 million rental units under some sort of local, state and federal program (p.199). A complete survey of Lower Park Slope's housing would focus on the wide variety of policy-led subtenures which exist there such as (inter alia) shelter allowance, J-51 tax incentives for landlords and HUD regulated housing. My focus, however, will be on rent regulation, because a *lack* of it is seen by neighbourhood residents and community organisers to play the largest role in dictating the housing opportunities and fortunes of different social groups which compete for housing in the neighbourhood. It is not possible to divorce gentrification in Lower Park Slope from the lack of rent regulated dwellings in the neighbourhood. In this section, a brief historical account of rent regulation in New York City will be provided, leading to a discussion of how a lack of regulation, and how recent reviews of regulations in other areas, facilitate gentrification in Lower Park Slope. The affordable housing crisis in New York City and Lower Park Slope will be subject to a brief summary, to provide the wider context in which gentrification is taking place, which warrants some final remarks on how greater government intervention is sorely needed to curb the threat of displacement in the neighbourhood.

5.3.1 Rent regulation and its absence in Lower Park Slope

While rent regulation, particularly in the form of rent control, is viewed by many as a quintessential New York City phenomenon, it actually has its origins in the federal government and has been subject to all kinds of interference from both the City *and* State of New York since its inception in 1943 (Brecher and Horton, 1991). Responsibility for *rent control* was passed into State hands in 1947, the first time when the year a building was constructed became a key factor in determining how much rent could be charged (Schwartz, 1984, 1995). This has remained the case today - rent control applies to all units in buildings of three or more apartments constructed before February 1st, 1947, and occupied since before July 1st, 1971 by the same tenants. Because of these strict requirements and the passage of time, not to mention landlord harassment of 'sitting tenants' out of rent controlled apartments in

some neighbourhoods (Mele, 1994), rent controlled apartments are gradually disappearing – the average householder age is 71 years, and in 1996 there were only 70,572 rent controlled units left, or 3.4% of the city's rental stock (van Ryzin and Kamber, 2002, p.199).

In the late 1960s, with the tightening of New York's rental housing market, tenant activism in an effort to seek similar protection in buildings constructed after 1947 led to the introduction in 1969 of the other form of rent regulation in the City, *rent stabilization* (Schwartz, 1984). Originally enforced by the City yet subject to (fickle) State laws, rent stabilization applies to apartments in buildings with six or more units built between 1947 and 1974⁴⁵ and to tenants who moved into pre-1947 buildings with six or more units after June 30, 1971. It is less restrictive than rent control in that permissible rent increases are set each year by an appointed (municipal) Rent Guidelines Board, and these increases are lower for tenants remaining in their apartments than for those newly entering apartments (Brecher and Horton, 1991, p.123). The years 1971 and 1974 are central to both these forms of rent regulation – in 1971 the State, worried about the rise in abandonment citywide, introduced vacancy decontrol on all units in the city, with the aim of ending rent regulation altogether. For three years, tenant groups protested against vacancy decontrol, arguing that it was putting much of the housing stock out of reach for moderate- and low-income groups, and these protests were remarkably successful⁴⁶, as the State almost completely reversed its policy in 1974 (Lawson, 1984, p.218-9), reinstating rent stabilization for all units decontrolled in this three year period. The result was that many more units in New York City became rent stabilized, as vacant apartments, rent controlled before 1971, moved into the stabilization system. Today, rent stabilized apartments number over 1 million, just over half all units in the city (van Ryzin and Kamber, 2002, p.202).

Critics of rent regulation – and there are many - argue that its two most serious effects are abandonment, because landlords cannot charge the rents they require to

⁴⁵ Post-1974 buildings that were built with various forms of government subsidy or tax relief may also be subject to rent stabilization (Romano, 2001).

⁴⁶ Mele (1994, p.180) has summarised these successes as follows: "Each time the [rent regulation] bills have faced the legislature for debate on renewal or expiration, strong efforts by housing proponents and general popular pressure for rent laws blocked efforts to overturn them".

finance maintenance and improvements, and reduced revenues from property taxes (see Schwartz, 1995). Furthermore, housing economists have long argued that because many tenants stay in one regulated apartment for most of their lives, the market tightens for newcomers to cities, protecting current residents at the expense of immigrants⁴⁷ (e.g. Keating, 1998). Salins (1999) claims that rent regulation is “the granddaddy and archvillain of New York’s regulatory ensemble”, and adds another reason for us to question its continued presence by suggesting that

“stabilized prices are almost always the wrong prices, prices different from what an unregulated housing market would charge; and rent regulation has its most egregious impact on the middle and upper end of the market, where the price differential between market and regulated rents is the greatest. This has two undesirable effects; it reduces the demand for new housing, and it misallocates the existing housing stock” (p.59).

Salins’s point is that middle and upper income tenants get far too good a deal from rent stabilization, and that rent regulation has led to a situation where there are low rents charged in large apartments and high rents charged in small apartments. However, the validity of his criticism of rent regulation can be called into question once it is recognised that an unregulated housing market, left to its own devices in a neo-liberal fashion, would feature many more “wrong prices” for low income tenants than the stabilized prices we see today; thus to remove rent regulation across the board and retreat before the free market, as Salins suggests, is not the way to reduce housing inequalities in New York City.

Proponents of rent regulation maintain that abandonment is not caused exclusively by its enforcement; in fact, it is the sheer volume of low-income tenants with little or no prospect of their situation improving that causes landlords to walk away from their properties (Phillips-Fein, 2000, p.28). As Schwartz (1995) has pointed out:

“Defenders of the system....doubt whether a repeal of regulation would achieve its purported benefits, arguing that rents in poor neighbourhoods would still be higher than what a local resident could afford to pay, and that a repeal would lead to widespread price gouging” (p.998).

⁴⁷ This is dubious. While there is likely to be a high incidence of the problem of ‘sitting tenants’ in rent-regulated apartments, there is evidence to suggest that turnover in these apartments is quite substantial. For instance, 35% of such apartments turned over between 1993 and 1996, compared to 42% of unregulated apartments (Phillips-Fein, 2000, p.29).

In addition, rent regulation is viewed as attractive because it protects tenants satisfied with their current housing (Brecher and Horton, 1991, p.123), and more recent evidence has shown that landlords of regulated buildings in New York City have actually been doing well in the recent property boom – according to the Rent Guidelines Board, operating income in such buildings increased by 11% in both 1998 and 1999 (Phillips-Fein, 2000, p.28). Most relevant to this thesis, the enforcement of rent regulation is likely to go some way towards benefiting low-income tenants living in neighbourhoods experiencing gentrification, protecting them from the rent hikes which landlords may be encouraged to introduce once a neighbourhood becomes ‘up and coming’. There can be no question that if there is a limit to how much rent can be raised, gentrification-induced displacement becomes less of a threat than it would be without such limits. As Mele (1994) has correctly argued, “[h]olding onto rent-controlled or rent-stabilized apartments is a form of passive resistance to gentrifying pressures” (p.180). More recently, while I find theoretical flaws and epistemological lacunae in Freeman and Braconi’s (2002) efforts to assess the magnitude of displacement in New York City, one can only agree with their conclusion that

“rent stabilization is quite effective in restraining rent increases in gentrifying neighbourhoods, thus weakening the link between gentrification and secondary displacement. In the ongoing debate about rent regulation in New York, critics must recognize this function of rent stabilization” (p.4).

The *lack* of rent stabilization (something that Freeman and Braconi virtually ignore), or indeed some form of tenant protection, is the most significant problem for low-income tenants in Lower Park Slope. The housing stock, comprising mostly of terraced homes built for single families in the early twentieth century, is largely immune to rent stabilization because many of the buildings contain fewer than six units⁴⁸. This leads to a situation which has been described as follows:

“Where landlords with rent stabilized buildings must provide tenants with new leases with limited increases when their old ones expire, owners of one- to five-unit buildings don’t have to offer

⁴⁸ The problem is not confined to Lower Park Slope - there are approximately 600,000 households citywide in buildings with fewer than six units (McCarthy, 2001).

anything – a trip to housing court and an eviction notice is all that’s needed to clear out old tenants” (Hussey, 1999).

The economic incentive for a landlord to ‘clear out’ tenants, either to sell their properties or attract wealthier tenants, is very high in gentrifying neighbourhoods, and because of a lack of rent stabilization in many of the desirable small buildings in these neighbourhoods, the legal right to do this is in place. As Hussey (1999) also points out, it says much about the problems for tenants living in unregulated buildings that the city’s Housing Court calls the landlord versus tenant cases which appear “No-Defense Holdovers” – there simply is no legal option left for a tenant other than to plead for delays to their impending eviction while they search for a new place to live.

Lower Park Slope is thus on the verge of experiencing “rampant displacement”, as one community organiser told me (personal communication, 23rd August 2001). There are hundreds of small, fewer-than-six-unit buildings in the neighbourhood, and massive demand for them as gentrification intensifies. In 1999, the Fifth Avenue Committee, a non-profit community organisation to be discussed in detail later, undertook a survey of how many small buildings had changed hands in the neighbourhood over a three year period. They were concerned about the fact that a change in ownership in unregulated small buildings leads to significant increases in rents, as new landlords seek to claim back on their mortgage and maintenance payments, and seek to profit from post-recession overspill gentrification by attracting wealthier tenants. When a landlord buys a building in New York City, they must file building deed and mortgage records with the County Clerk, and there is an on-line data service called REALIST (<http://www.realist.com>) which compiles this data and allows authorised and approved parties (usually involved in real estate) to search it using a wide variety of criteria. Figure 11 shows the results of the Fifth Avenue Committee’s investigations, displaying the percentage of small buildings (fewer than six units) sold between 1996 and 1999 in ten of the thirteen census tracts of Lower Park Slope. In three tracts, over one quarter of buildings changed hands, and no tract has a percentage below 12%. This is a remarkable pace of turnover in three years, indicating booming real estate activity in a new ‘frontier’ of gentrification. The implications of such activity for low-income tenants are worrying - many can

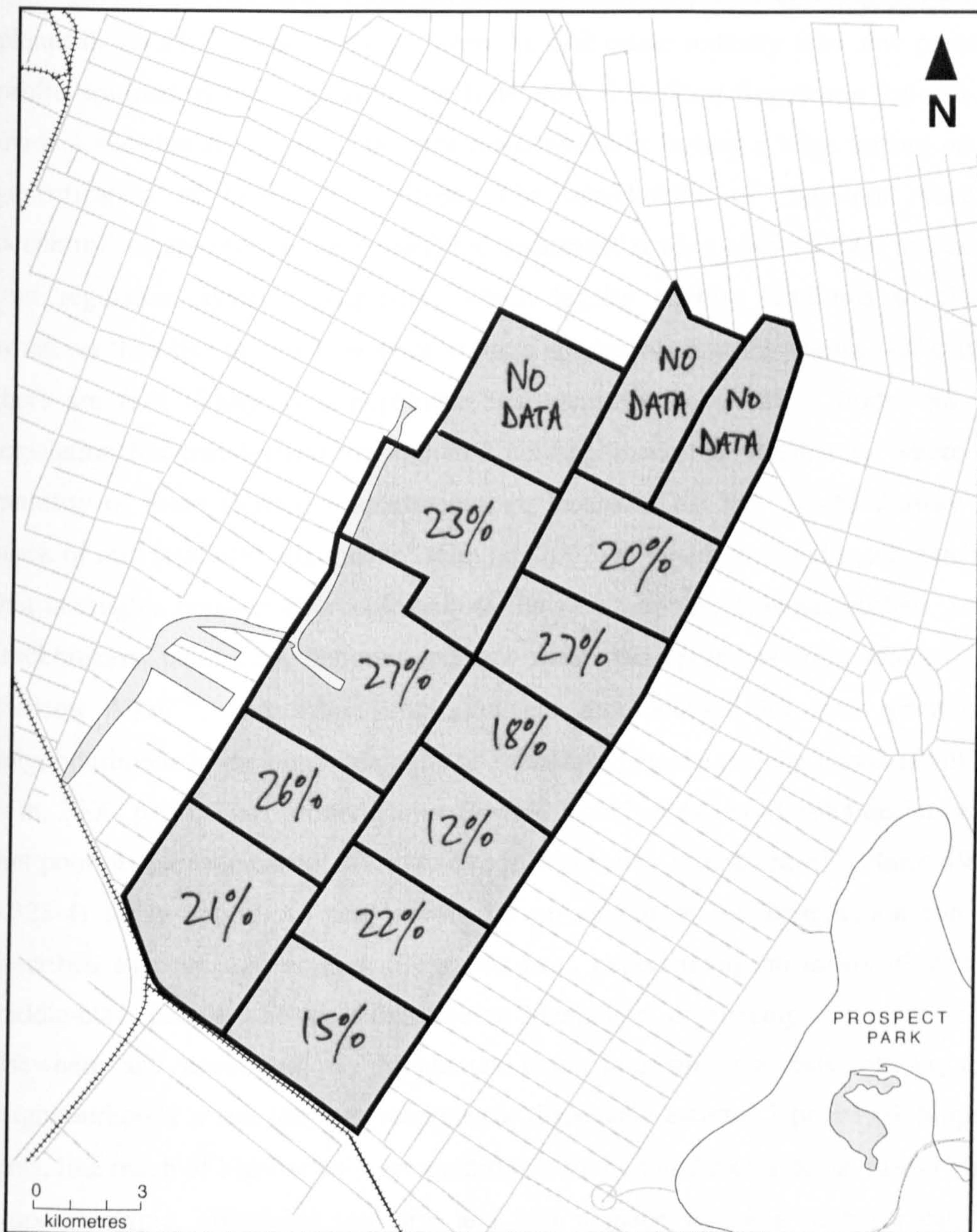


Figure 11 – Percentage of small buildings (<6 units) sold in Lower Park Slope, 1996-1999, by census tract. Source: Fifth Avenue Committee, 2000.

suddenly find themselves with impossible rent increases, and subject to displacement.

New tenants who are able to pay the rents demanded by new building owners are plentiful. In 1997, under pressure from the real estate industry who saw potential profits spurned by rent regulation, the New York State Rent Regulation Reform Act made a substantial change to the rent laws, which is having a huge impact on the gentrification of Lower Park Slope. The introduction of 'high-rent vacancy decontrol' meant that any rent-stabilized apartment renting above \$2000 leaves the rent regulation system completely, which legally enables landlords to charge whatever they like to new tenants once these apartments become vacant. Of course, there are few, if any, such expensive apartments in Lower Park Slope, but this legislation has transformed the high-end housing market in Manhattan, where the majority of these expensive apartments are located. This has "whittled away the stock of rent regulated apartments" (Hevesi, 2002) in Manhattan and made much of that borough's housing affordable only to the very wealthy. This has pushed young stockbrokers, publishers, dot-com and new media entrepreneurs from Manhattan's 'Silicon Alley'⁴⁹, and even young lawyers and doctors out into gentrifying neighbourhoods in the outer boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx (Phillips-Fein, 2000, p.29). Thus former Mayor Edward Koch's (in)famous 1984 declamation that poor people who cannot afford to live in Manhattan should leave⁵⁰ (Plunz, 1990, p.323-4) today applies to people who by no stretch of the imagination can be described as poor. Lower Park Slope has been experiencing an influx of young, middle-class people who are either fleeing Manhattan, or arriving in the city from elsewhere and unable to pay Manhattan rents, and who are thus moving into neighbourhoods where they can retain some disposable income. Upper Park Slope's rents, like much of Manhattan's, are prohibitive to the middle-classes, so Lower Park Slope is prime, affordable territory, and still a place where a property can be purchased for less than one might expect for a neighbourhood less than four miles from Wall Street.

⁴⁹ This area stretches southward from the Flatiron District (23rd Street) to the tip of Manhattan, and before the recent dot-com 'bust', the new media industry was the city's fastest growing business sector, employing 18,000 people in more than 1,100 internet-based, multi-media software and online entertainment companies (Abu-Lughod, 1999, p.521, note 24).

⁵⁰ Koch actually said "We're not catering to the poor anymore.....there are four other boroughs they can live in. They don't have to live in Manhattan." (Quoted in Plunz, 1990, p.371, note 71).

The experiences of Al, who was made redundant following the collapse of a dot-com venture, and has now gone into business with three colleagues to run evening classes in website design, are indicative of the recent exodus of young professionals from Manhattan into Brooklyn:

“I got laid off because of the huge recession in the industry, which would have been unthinkable about eighteen months ago. It was a classic boom and bust story – an online travel company that suddenly lost all of its customers. In fact, about 50% of the people I know from college who got jobs in new media, advertising, and especially the dot-commers, have all been laid off. Now we’re known as the dot-communists. It’s an absolute nightmare right now, and is going to get worse after the September 11th events. The four of us got laid off at virtually the same time. We had this killing apartment on 17th Street [in Manhattan], and we used to walk to work. There’s no way we could pay the rent, so we all moved out here [to 11th Street in Lower Park Slope]. I know that we’re probably considered yuppies here. The crazy thing right now is that we are all broke yuppies with heavy credit card debts! We don’t think of gentrification very often, as I don’t think we’re classic gentrifiers by any means. None of us in this building have much disposable income, we’ve only just started up this adult education business. I accept that we are nothing like as badly off as some people, or in a situation which is impossible to escape, but we are certainly in a lower class than the wealthy 30/40-somethings you get as you head up the Slope. I’d say we are in-between the poor and the rich” (Al, interview, 12th October 2001).

Christian, another victim of a dot-com failure, was very direct and to-the-point when I asked him if his experience of moving from Manhattan to Brooklyn for cheaper property was common among members of his profession:

“It’s not just common, it’s an epidemic! It shows that gentrification is driven by money, plain and simple. A strong economy, and insane real estate prices everywhere else. If you can’t pay Manhattan rents, you live in one of the other four boroughs, and Brooklyn has the best streets and more space. If you can’t afford the stupidly high rents in some parts of Brooklyn, you go to where it’s cheaper. This area is a classic example of that happening, right as we speak. People will always want to live as close as they can to their workplace, and in a safe, nice neighbourhood. I lived in Manhattan for four years, and for plain ignorance I didn’t really want to move to Brooklyn. But now I’m here, I kind of prefer it as there’s more space” (Christian, interview, 24th November 2001).

The result is the physical and social transformation to the landscape that is post-recession gentrification, which places enormous pressures on an already tight rental housing market, the fabric of which I will now explore.

5.3.2 Affordability in Lower Park Slope: a worsening problem

While New York City's housing market "has been in a state of perpetual crisis, real or perceived, for much of the twentieth century⁵¹" (Schill and Scafidi, 1999, p.11), it is only in recent years that the face of the crisis has changed from one of severe housing quality problems and abandonment (such as in the 1970s) to one of severe affordability problems for many of New York City's tenants. The affordability crisis began during the 1980s economic boom which saw the increasing commodification of housing⁵² in tandem with the erosion of large-scale manufacturing and the emergence of a post-industrial economy, and successive political ideologies which prioritised the private marketplace and its middle-class participants at the expense of the working-class and the poor in an effort to dig New York out of its 1970s fiscal difficulties (Harris, 1991; Abu-Lughod, 1999). There is no space here for a detailed discussion of these developments, but it is useful to point out that the crisis of affordable housing is inextricably linked to the massive economic restructuring of New York, where the gap between rich and poor expanded almost without relent, leading to the present situation where

"an imbalance between tenants' incomes and apartment rents accounts for the overwhelming majority of severe housing problems in New York City" (Schill and Scafidi, 1999, p.12).

As these authors estimate, there are nearly three quarters of a million New Yorkers with severe housing problems (ibid. p.12), most of which are connected to affordability, and little signs that this number will decrease in the near future. In fact, one analyst has argued that these problems are "destined to get worse" in future years because "there are just not enough new homes or apartments being built to accommodate the housing needs of new families" (Salins, 1999, p.53). In August

⁵¹ Plunz (1990, p.xxxv) traces the crisis back even further, back to the mid-nineteenth century.

⁵² Commodification, however, should not be overstated. New York City actually had a '10-year plan' of affordable housing construction from 1986-1995, the largest municipal housing program in the United States (van Ryzin and Genn, 1999).

2000, something of the level of the affordability crisis, and the despair in efforts to resolve it, was captured by the chairman of the city's Rent Guidelines Board, Edward Hochman, who told the *New York Daily News* that "[w]e basically need knights on white horses to come in and build new housing" (quoted in McCoy, 2000).

As this housing crisis cannot be considered without reference to the incomes of tenants, it is useful to turn to some recent data to explain why so many tenants are victims of economic restructuring and the associated real estate boom. One of the more useful sources of data is the annual 'Income and Affordability Study' undertaken by the City's Rent Guidelines Board (published every April) which reports on housing affordability and tenant income in the rental market by considering a broad range of market forces and public policies affecting tenants across the city. I have extracted some relevant statistics from the most recent Study (NYCRGB, 2002), which help to present the affordability crisis in the context of the City's economic condition. Tables 18 and 19 show that from 1993-2000, in industries with a sizeable net increase in jobs (construction, trade, services), real median wages declined or remained fairly stagnant, whereas during the same time period, in industries with a sizeable net decrease in jobs or minimal job growth (FIRE, manufacturing, government sector), real median wages increased. It does not take a shrewd eye to see that the highest levels in job growth are seen in industries which pay the least, particularly in the service sector, *and* in industries that see the smallest annual increases in wages.

Table 18 - Average Payroll Employment by Industry for NYC, 1993-2000 (in thousands) (Source: NYCRGB, 2002)

Industry	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Construction	85.8	89.3	90.2	91.4	93.8	102.4	114.1	121.9
Manufacturing	288.8	280.4	273.5	266.4	264.8	259.1	250.7	242.8
Transportation	203.4	201.5	202.9	204.9	205.5	206.2	207.9	213.3
Trade	537.9	544.1	555.4	565.0	577.7	589.8	609.9	627.1
FIRE	471.6	480.3	473.4	468.5	473.4	483.4	486.0	491.1
Services	1,115.80	1,148.10	1,183.60	1,226.70	1,274.90	1,325.50	1,384.20	1457.2
Government	587.6	578.3	560.1	546.0	551.5	561.5	567.4	569.5

Table 19 - Average Real Wage Rates by Industry for NYC 1993-2000 (1989 dollars)
(Source: NYCRGB, 2002)

Industry	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Construction	34,305	34,399	34,023	34,166	33,547	34,671	35,516	36,945
Manufacturing	31,151	31,838	32,838	34,678	35,502	39,027	38,998	41,699
Transportation	34,945	35,311	35,733	36,626	36,534	38,136	38,234	38,607
Trade	24,234	24,303	24,031	23,851	24,359	25,019	25,315	24,880
FIRE	63,290	59,290	65,902	74,258	81,100	87,038	90,108	104,995
Services	29,210	29,108	29,422	29,340	29,873	31,272	32,097	33,190
Government	29,936	30,693	31,851	32,144	32,615	31,822	32,622	32,521

These figures show the extent to which the gap between the highest paid and lowest paid of the city's labour force has widened during the 1990s. They hint that New York is becoming a more unequal city, featuring a split-level economy which has serious implications for the housing choices of low-income tenants (Sassen, 1991; Harris, 1991; Fainstein, 1994; Abu-Lughod, 1999). This is more than evident when we turn to the level of neighbourhood, expand the time scale, and look at Lower Park Slope's employment by industry since 1980 (Table 20).

Table 20 - Employment by Industry, Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000. Source: US
Censuses of Population (corresponding years).

Industry	1980	1990	2000
Construction	2.7%	3.7%	2.3%
Manufacturing	23.5%	13.8%	6.0%
Transportation (& Communication)	9.7%	9.1%	13.4%
Trade	15.1%	12.6%	10.0%
FIRE	12.4%	11.6%	10.1%
Services (all types)	33.4%	45.0%	54.2%
Government	3.3%	4.4%	4.1%

Note the significant decrease of those employed in the manufacturing industry, with an associated significant increase in those employed in the professional and personal service industries. Turning to housing data, every three years the US Census Bureau undertake a ‘Housing and Vacancy Survey’ in New York City, the main aim of which is to establish the vacancy rate for available rental units, and a wealth of useful housing data is gathered during the survey. The period 1996-1999 saw extraordinary tightening of the rental market, expressed in a decrease of 17000 ‘vacant-for-rent’ units citywide, and a concomitant reduction in the vacancy rate across New York City (from 4.01% to 3.19%) and in Brooklyn (from 4.20% to 3.26%). One of the more disconcerting trends over the 1996-1999 period was the remarkable contraction of cheaper apartments and equally remarkable expansion of expensive apartments in the city’s rental housing market. Table 21 presents the percentage change over these three years, and provides telling evidence to show that across the city the amount of people paying under \$700 per month on rent has declined dramatically, whereas there has been a significant increase in tenants paying above \$700 per month, and especially above \$1000 per month.

Table 21 - Percentage Change in Monthly Gross Rent in Renter-Occupied Housing in New York City, 1996-1999 (Source: US Census 1999 'Housing and Vacancy Survey').

Monthly Gross Rent	
(April 1999 Dollars)	% change 1996-1999
Total	0.4%
below \$300	-4.5%
\$300-399	-9.9%
\$400-499	-6.0%
\$500-599	-13.2%
\$600-699	-1.2%
\$700-799	6.8%
\$800-899	8.5%
\$900-999	0.2%
\$1000-\$1249	8.1%
\$1250-\$1499	19.7%
\$1500-\$1749	18.8%
\$1750+	34.0%

This should not be treated as evidence to show that tenants are becoming wealthier – it shows rather that the supply of affordable apartments has shrunk substantially in a very short space of time. When this is considered in tandem with the fact that the number of low-wage jobs has expanded dramatically, the increasing problems facing people of low-income in New York City become all too apparent. As has been reported in one insightful article, over the past three years the median rent citywide has increased nearly twice as fast as tenant incomes, and one quarter of tenants in New York City pay more than half of their incomes on rent (Phillips-Fein, 2000).

This discussion is currently rather general because the published data of the Housing and Vacancy Survey is not small scale, only going down to the level of ‘sub-borough district’ (roughly equivalent to the Community Board area). In order to examine

some similar housing figures for Lower Park Slope, we must turn to the US census. While this does expand the time scale (from 1996-1999 to 1990-2000), and offer different rental price parameters from the Housing and Vacancy Survey, we can see that the contraction of cheaper apartments and expansion of expensive apartments is even more acute at the neighbourhood level (Table 22).

Table 22 - Percentage Change in Monthly Gross Rent in Renter-Occupied Housing in Lower Park Slope, 1990-2000. Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years)

Monthly Gross Rent	% Change 1990-2000
Less than \$200	-2.4%
\$200 to \$299	-5.0%
\$300 to \$499	-15.1%
\$500 to \$749	-6.4%
\$750 to \$999	3.8%
\$1,000 or more	25.8%
No cash rent	-0.5%

As Table 22 makes clear, the supply of affordable rental accommodation in Lower Park Slope has dwindled significantly since 1990. Given that the 1990s have seen real median wages remain relatively stagnant in services industries citywide, but the costs of rental housing in Lower Park Slope (where over half the population are employed in such industries) rise dramatically (Tables 11 to 13) it is hardly surprising that there is a crisis of affordable rental housing, to which gentrification has contributed. As in numerous other New York City neighbourhoods, three quarters of Lower Park Slope’s residents are tenants (Table 23), the majority of whom are not protected by any form of rent regulation because of the nature of the housing stock. This means that low-income tenants, many paying a significant proportion of their monthly incomes on rent, are particularly vulnerable to rent increases brought about by changes in building ownership (Figure 11), and the

citywide affordable housing crisis means that displacement through gentrification is not only an emotional upheaval but also an economic upheaval, as a displaced low-income tenant will probably experience severe difficulties in finding an affordable apartment elsewhere.

Table 23 - Tenure in Occupied Housing Units, Lower Park Slope, 1980-2000

Source: US Censuses of Population (corresponding years).

	1980	1990	2000
Owned	19.3	24.7	24.2
Rented	80.7	75.3	75.8

While over 1300 units have been added to Lower Park Slope’s housing stock since 1990, (Table 13) they have been added at the same time that gentrification has arrived with full force, meaning it is most unlikely that many of these new units could be classed as affordable, and almost all will not be rent stabilized. This suggests that, aside from a crying need for affordable new housing, tighter rent regulation in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification is absolutely essential to curb displacement threats. Given the content of this discussion, it is very hard to understand why one housing analyst (Salins, 1999) would advocate deregulating all rents in the city, in the following terms:

“Rent deregulation by itself may not be enough to revive New York’s housing market, but it would go a long way toward making the revival possible. Deregulation would stimulate new housing demand and competition among housing suppliers, triggering enhanced maintenance, lower rents, and rising vacancy rates” (p.67).

While I do not wish to delve into a detailed comparison with Toronto until the next chapter, it is important to point out that the Toronto experience shows that loosening the restrictions on rent can play absolute havoc with low-income tenants’ lives. In Toronto affordable new housing has all but disappeared in favour of condominiums and luxury loft conversions, maintenance improvements have resulted in a massive increase in eviction applications (to attract new tenants to cover this form of landlord

expenditure), average rents have in fact *increased* rapidly and substantially, and the vacancy rate is alarmingly low. It is impossible to see how rent deregulation can ‘revive’ the precarious housing market in New York City – all this would do is turn the market over to exclusive private sector control, leaving hundreds of thousands of tenants at the mercy of a real estate frenzy which would hammer the nail in the coffin of all people in the city who are unable to compete in a ferociously competitive housing arena which already privileges middle-class interests.

In a recent article in *The New York Times* (Hevesi, 2002), Salins was quoted as saying:

“My own assumption is that within 5 to 10 years, the impact of deregulation would be positive, with everybody entering the market on equal terms”.

Contrast this with the warning made over a decade ago by two scholars of New York City housing:

“The wide extent of chronic housing and income problems suggests that *private market forces are not likely to eliminate the city’s housing problems*, since they have persisted through a period of strong economic growth. It is unlikely that these conditions will be alleviated without massive levels of *public* intervention to improve the housing stock and to increase the income of the low income population” (DiGiovanni and Minnite, 1991, p.305, emphasis added).

One could add to this excellent assessment that further public intervention is needed to extend the rent stabilization law to buildings containing less than six units, with priority given to gentrifying neighbourhoods like Lower Park Slope. This would prevent the private sector from taking advantage of this aspect of rent stabilization which arguably facilitates gentrification and causes immense worry and hardship for low-income tenants with nowhere else to go. The whole point of rent regulation is not only to protect the tenant in place in an apartment, but to keep an apartment affordable for tenants who will move into it in the future. Removing the six-unit restriction would prevent any desperate scramble for remaining affordable apartments, and it is low-income tenants both current *and* future who would benefit.

This subsection has provided a sobering, albeit brief, overview of the manifold difficulties facing people of low-income in New York City and Lower Park Slope, where inequalities in housing and employment are very much interlinked and join forces to diminish the economic prospects of poorer residents. While there can be little question that gentrification does cost a city a sizeable proportion of its affordable housing stock, it would of course take a much more sophisticated (and difficult) quantitative analysis to demonstrate the true impact of gentrification on the decline in affordable housing in New York City and Lower Park Slope. In addition, gentrification is only one piece of a puzzle which is complicated by several connected factors such as neoliberal housing policy which privileges higher-income interests and marginalizes poverty (Wyly and Hammel, 2002), the globalisation of real estate which ensures that luxury condominiums rather than low-income apartments are constructed (Hackworth, 2002), and the continuing divisive economic trends of the post-industrial metropolis where there are higher-paid jobs in the FIRE sector for the few, lower-paid jobs in service-based sectors for the many, and a continued erosion of what is left of the city's large-scale manufacturing base, shifting workers into lower-wage sectors or unemployment (Sassen, 1991, Abu-Lughod, 1999). While the descriptive data in this subsection provides a useful picture of the wider context in which gentrification is taking place (increasing inequality in both employment and housing), such data cannot convey the sheer hardship faced by low-income tenants in Lower Park Slope. It is now necessary to turn to some qualitative *evidence* of gentrification-induced displacement to substantiate the claim that refinement to the rent regulation laws, however distant a portal, is badly needed in Lower Park Slope, and indeed other gentrifying neighbourhoods in the city with a similar housing stock.

5.4 “The neighbourhood changed, not the building I lived in”: displacement and resistance to gentrification in Lower Park Slope

5.4.1 Qualitative evidence of displacement

Several interviews I conducted with people worried about displacement or, worse still, with their stories of actual displacement, provide much flesh to the current efforts of a community organisation to resist gentrification in Lower Park Slope (these efforts will be described in detail in the next subsection). There is not enough

space to include all of the detailed personal histories I collected, so the purpose in this subsection is to convey something of the experience of displacement in Lower Park Slope, and provide an idea of the kind of situations which have motivated a strong local campaign of anti-gentrification activism. It is therefore worth spending some time listening to the deeply troubling story of David, a maintenance worker in a high school, who provided a distressing account of his life as a vulnerable tenant in the neighbourhood:

“Within six to nine months of moving in, the landlord said he wanted me to move as he had found someone else who wanted the place, and would be putting the rent up if I stayed. The place upstairs had recently been let for \$1000 a month, about \$400 more than what the previous tenant had paid, an elderly lady. Apparently she was sick of the heating problems in the building, so she left, I don’t know where to. I figured the landlord was trying to get rid of me so he could make more money, so I stayed, and this was when the problems started. He started harassing me, and this continued for the entire 3½ years I lived there. On some evenings he would park his car outside the building and play the radio incredibly loud, about three feet from my window. He would yell at his family who lived in the building, and whenever there was any maintenance issue he would usually end up yelling at me. I remember one day he said that I was putting my recycling bags in the wrong place, and I pointed out to him that he was supposed to have a recycling can, and then he just lost it and screamed at me saying ‘nobody tells me what to do’.

“I had a leaking faucet in my bathroom, and when he came and fixed it, it would break again within a month, and then he would fix it again, and then it would break again. If I ever questioned him he would say ‘so get the hell out then’ and walk away cursing me. I was paying \$675, but the tenants upstairs were now paying about \$1200, so clearly he wanted to make more money on the place. One evening he knocked on my door and said that he had refinanced the building and got a lower interest rate, and I have to go now. When I told him that I was unhappy about this, there were threats like ‘well if you stay you will have to face the consequences’. A few weeks later, there was a turnaround and he said he had a place for me on 26th Street in Sunset Park, with no stove or bathroom washbasin, but he would give it to me for \$500 a month. I was desperate at the time, so a reduction in rent was fine by me, and I went and saw the place and thought it was liveable as I could use the kitchen sink as a washbasin, and a friend had a stove I could borrow. The landlord made it clear that it was temporary, and I thought that it would be better than living near him, and it was in the middle of the high-school semester where I work, so I didn’t have time to look for a new place, so I moved in.

“A few months went by, and then one night he came over and said ‘A friend of mine has decided he wants to rent this property from me, and you have to go.’ I said no way, I have just moved in, and then one day I came home and found a note on my door saying ‘be careful with your bike’ as it was scratching the walls in the hallway. When I confronted him about this, saying that the hallway was so

thin it was impossible to avoid the walls, he basically stood right up to me against a wall and threatened me, saying something like ‘stop scratching it or else’. Then we met again a few days later, and he asked me if I had found a new place and when would I be moving out, and I told him to give me a break, and then he threatened to kill me. It was ferocious and he was literally screaming in my face and I was terrified. I took it to be a genuine threat, as he was completely hysterical” (David, interview, 18th December 2001).

In the end David was evicted, and had to move out of the neighbourhood to Prospect Heights, which is north of Park Slope. But even when harassment doesn’t take place, displacement can be truly traumatizing, as Martha⁵³, a single mother who at the time of her displacement worked in a day-care center, revealed:

“Five months before the end of the [annual] lease, I got a notice that my rent was going to jump from \$750 a month to \$1400 a month. My income was \$19000 a year at the time, so there was no way I could pay it. I went to the landlord and asked him why the rent increase was so steep, and he’s like ‘that’s how much I can get, that’s how much I want from you’. I decided to stay and see what happened at the end of the lease, and when he came to ask me for the rent and I said ‘I can’t pay it’, he gave me an eviction notice right there. I was basically homeless for four months, so I stayed with a friend in Queens for a while, and then when school started again for my [12 year-old] son we went back to Brooklyn and stayed with his Godmother while all my stuff remained in storage. It was a pretty tough time for him as he didn’t really understand why we had to move, and I felt bad because a kid really needs a permanent home, you know?” (interview, 26th September 2001).

So just as there is something deeply wrong with a lack of government intervention on the rents that can be charged in buildings with less than six units, so there is with a process of displacement which leaves blameless tenants almost blaming themselves for their situation. In the end, and with help from the Fifth Avenue Committee, Martha found an apartment in Boerum Hill, which luckily is not too far from where she used to live. It’s interesting to learn what happened to her old apartment:

“It was leased to this yuppie couple. So were all of the apartments in that building. They were leased to people who can pay the rents. I guess the thing I could never understand was that he didn’t do anything to the apartment before putting up the rent. When I moved out, he changed nothing. Why should anyone pay him 1400 dollars for the same place?! The neighbourhood changed, not the

⁵³ Martha is this respondent’s actual name – with her consent, I decided not to protect her identity because her case received a great deal of coverage in the local and city media. She is now an organiser for the Fifth Avenue Committee, and an individual from whom I learned a great deal about Lower Park Slope’s gentrification.

building I lived in, and he knew he could find people to put more money in his pockets than me. He doubled the money for the same apartment, which was pretty modest! In the apartment on the top floor, a couple moved in with their cat. Before, there was this big family with little kids living there. When I went to pick up my mail, I said to them, 'Did you know there was a *whole family* living here before you and there were kids where your cat is?' and they go 'Well, we can afford it. They couldn't pay the rent. That's how it works!'. That's all they said! Can you believe that?!" (interview, 26th September 2001).

Martha's case received attention in The Metro Section of *The New York Times* (Barstow, 2000), and the newspaper tracked down her landlord to ask for his side of the story⁵⁴. The Italian-American family of the landlord, Ronald Fatato (one of the enemies of anti-gentrification activists in the neighbourhood), have long roots in the neighbourhood, opening their family business in 1912, which expanded into a sizeable meatpacking firm and is now mostly involved with real estate. Fatato, who now lives in the suburb of Westchester County, told the *Times* that his "family hung tough back when the lower Slope was a ramshackle mess" and when he "was shoveling hamburger alongside Hispanics". The following paragraph from the article tells us much about his perspective:

"So now, as prosperity pushes the professional hordes right into Ronnie Fatato's lap, he asks another question: Why shouldn't he cash in? Where is the sin in clearing out 'undesirables'? Hey, he tells you, he would love to live on Park Avenue, but he can't afford it. Do you hear him whining? 'This,' he barks, 'isn't Russia!'" (Barstow, 2000).

In a local newspaper article, Fatato was quoted as follows:

"I carried this neighbourhood through all the garbage and now the neighbourhood is getting a little better and I can't make a profit? This is a free market apartment; I have the right to do as I please" (Sweeney, 2000).

While Fatato is clearly an individual who sees little wrong in the displacement of people with roots in the neighbourhood as deep as his family's, there is little to stop him in his tracks. As he argues, America is not Russia (we can presume that, however ignorant, 'Russia' is a reference to socialism), so the capitalist system allows for the commodification of housing according to income, and the capitalist

⁵⁴ Unfortunately my request for an interview with Mr. Fatato was greeted with a sharp 'NO WAY!' and then he hung up the phone!

system also allows him to raise the rent to a level of his choosing in his buildings which have fewer than six units.

Such a system was also responsible for another recent tale of threatened displacement which generated significant media interest (e.g. Rizio-Hamilton, 2000; Phillips-Fein, 2000) – the story of Gary and Virginia, a couple who moved to Lower Park Slope from Trinidad in 1967. The landlord of their unregulated apartment on a desirable block, Berkeley Place between 5th and 6th Avenues, died in 1998, and the building was sold to a young couple who raised Gary and Virginia's rent from \$450 to \$1000 a month in order to cover their mortgage and projected 'improvement' costs. This was far more than Gary and Virginia could afford, and a compromise offer of \$700 per month was rejected by the new building owners with the following explanation:

“[F]or us, the building is not in the best condition, and we really want to focus on getting it in some kind of shape, and that's basically the decision we've taken in talking with some architects and engineers. We have to do some serious work inside the building if we're going to maintain it at all. *We just need the apartment back.*The previous owners weren't compelled to keep the rent to a low amount. They were doing it because they were friends, and because they owned the building – they didn't have a mortgage to pay” (quoted in Rizio-Hamilton, 2000, my emphasis).

Under community pressure (the nature of which will be described in the next section) the new owners finally decided to let them stay for another two years (from November 2000). While in the media the new owners were portrayed as sympathetic to Gary and Virginia's predicament, and “very upset” about the whole situation, the quotation above illustrates that while nothing like as brutal as Ronald Fatato, the new owners (who were infants when Gary and Virginia first moved in) were viewing the building more in physical terms, an investment for them as opposed to a roof over their tenants' heads. The building was a place which had substantial sentimental and emotional value to Gary and Virginia, yet these values were secondary to both the economic interests of two new gentrifiers and the ideology of the state which does not offer the protection it should for people without the income to find alternative lodgings in a local housing market which has changed beyond recognition since their arrival in 1967.

These landlord versus tenant anecdotes are the nature of displacement in Lower Park Slope, a problem which has been escalating in the post-recession era of intense gentrification. Recognising that cases of displacement were becoming more numerous, a local non-profit community organisation, the Fifth Avenue Committee, decided that something had to be done to protect vulnerable tenants from eviction, and it is now time to switch the focus of this chapter to their efforts. A brief summary of community organising in New York City provides the context from which the Fifth Avenue Committee emerged, before detailing what they are doing to fight displacement in the neighbourhood.

5.4.2 The Fifth Avenue Committee and the Displacement Free Zone

“The issue for community groups is not simply coming out for or against growth but getting the right kind of growth” (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1991, p.317).

New York City has one of the richest and most complex histories of civic activism and urban social movements in the United States, with scarcely any period in its development exhibiting a lack of organised or disorganised resistance to a political situation seen as detrimental to particular social groups at particular times. ‘Community organising’ in New York City as we know it today, however, has a shorter history, and scholars have traced its origins to the late 1950s, following the emergence of a reform movement within the local Democratic party which forced the mayoral administration to become more alert to community issues (Schwartz, 1984; Fainstein and Fainstein, 1991). The 1960s still represent the pinnacle of community organising for social change in the city, particularly in minority-based attempts to improve the provision and quality of housing and education, and all in conjunction with the mobilization of Civil Rights, welfare rights, anti-war, black power and advocacy planning groups (Lander, 1997). As Katznelson (1981, p.193) has pointed out in a national context:

“In the early and middle 1960s, urban liberals and radicals were terribly optimistic about neighbourhood and community politics. ...[T]hey embraced a politics of local action convinced...that the community provided a place where collective organization could overcome the malaise of the Eisenhower years and the sterility of the labor movement. In the neighbourhoods of urban America, genuinely radical movements for social change could be forged”.

Optimism in New York City proved to be short-lived, however, as minority radicalism receded after the demise of the national Civil Rights movement (and was later enveloped by the public policy responses of successive administrations elected by the city's Jewish and white Catholic voters), and as the city plunged into a protracted fiscal crisis unlike anything seen since the Depression (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1991, p.316). In the 1970s, community organising took a back seat to the non-profit community development corporations⁵⁵ (CDCs) which emerged to counter the negligence of the City towards its poorest neighbourhoods. Housing became the key issue of the time, as abandonment and arson in these neighbourhoods on an unprecedented level had seen the City take up ownership of block-after-block of buildings whose landlords could not meet the maintenance and/or tax payments. By the end of the decade, the City government had become the largest single landlord in New York, with a staggering 40,000 apartments in receivership (Plunz, 1990, p.325). Its priorities elsewhere, ownership was as far as the City went, and the response to the lack of City policy or even will to do anything about these crumbling neighbourhoods has been documented as follows:

“As landlords abandoned their buildings, the City took ownership but failed miserably to keep the buildings up. Many were condemned, while others were effectively abandoned. All over the city, community organizations organized rent strikes, squatting and building takeovers, protests and sit-ins at city agencies, demanding that the City resolve the disastrous conditions in the enormously expanding stock of low-income housing coming into City ownership. The City responded by turning much of that housing over to community based organizations through the Community Management Program” (Lander, 1997, p.8).

While it is important to register that the City has also “actively pursued initiation of private redevelopment of select holdings” since the early 1980s (Plunz, 1990, p.325), it was this housing crisis which saw the establishment of one such non-profit community organisation in Lower Park Slope, the Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC) in 1977. It was founded by community residents following a series of meetings addressing such issues as housing problems and tenants rights, the revitalization of

⁵⁵ The earliest and most famous of these is the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, founded in 1967 and the result of intensive grassroots organisation and the famous intervention of Senator Robert F. Kennedy at a time when the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbourhood was stricken by racial discrimination, segregation, poverty and crumbling housing.

the Fifth Avenue commercial strip, and crime prevention. 1977 perhaps represents the deepest trough of disinvestment in Lower Park Slope, a time when sustained redlining and abandonment had resulted in over 200 vacant buildings and 159 vacant lots in the neighbourhood, many city-owned (<http://www.fifthave.org>), and a time when something had to be done to improve both the physical and social conditions of a place that was basically left to its own devices by a City administration with neither the money nor the will to take steps towards positive change. Unlike the community development corporations that were concerned almost exclusively with grassroots (re)development, the FAC was formed “to act as convenors and advocates, organizers and sources of technical assistance, and packages and developers” (ibid.) – certainly ambitious considering the long-standing conflict of interests between organising and development in community politics, but such ambition was perhaps needed in the aftermath of New York’s devastating 1970s fiscal retrenchment.

Funded since its inception by a mix of public and private sources, the initial activities of the FAC were somewhat pedestrian, involving the establishment of community gardens, sporadic renovations of neighbourhood buildings and façade improvements to local businesses, lobbying for better sanitation services and creating a neighbourhood family center. These development processes gathered steam in the 1980s, particularly in the form of a ‘sweat equity program’ aimed at renovating the dilapidated housing stock, the major boon of attracting a large supermarket (Key Foods) to a large vacant lot on Fifth Avenue, and the ‘Park Slope Village’ plan, which saw the construction of 44 affordable 3-family homes on a massive vacant block from Baltic to Butler Streets between Fourth and Fifth Avenues. Organisation took the form of marches against harassment practices by landlords and against unscrupulous real-estate tactics which led to tenant eviction, and employment programs were initiated to get youth off the streets and into work. The FAC’s current mission statement reflects this blend of development and organisation:

“To advance social and economic justice in South Brooklyn, principally by developing and managing affordable housing, creating employment opportunities, organizing residents and workers, and combating displacement caused by gentrification” (FAC Annual Report, 2001).

The most significant development advances since 1977 have been in housing provision. For more than two decades, the FAC has raised millions of dollars to build or rehabilitate over 600 housing units in over 100 buildings in the neighbourhood and its environs, making it the largest provider of *affordable* housing in South Brooklyn. When considering the substantial impact of the FAC's development initiatives on the physical (and to a lesser extent social) improvements in the neighbourhood since the 1970s, there arises a fairly obvious contradiction with their current organising initiatives. As the neighbourhood improved, it made gentrification a more likely scenario, because Lower Park Slope was no longer lying in such stark contrast to Upper Park Slope. While the conditions which led to overspill gentrification described earlier in this chapter are the principal reasons behind the current post-recession settlement of Lower Park Slope by the middle-class, they are not entirely sufficient for today's rampant gentrification to proceed. In an unfortunate yet not unrecognised irony, the FAC were, unwittingly, a major institutional force in establishing the preconditions for the gentrification of Lower Park Slope, yet today they are the major institution attempting to resist gentrification! As the FAC's Director of Organizing told me, "We know fully well that we're a piece of the puzzle!" (interview, 23rd August 2001). The more they improved the neighbourhood for current residents, the more attractive it became to new residents frozen out of higher-end, gentrified neighbourhoods by impossible sales and rentals prices. With their arrival, the previously low rents in Lower Park Slope escalated, and the older residents who were supposed to be benefiting from the improvements undertaken by the FAC ended up being indirectly threatened by these improvements as landlords realised that after a barren spell of profitability, they could now cash in on the neighbourhood – exactly in the manner exhibited by Ronald Fatato.

In 1999, the FAC devised a new strategy in the wake of a case involving two elderly sisters who could not afford a massive rent increase, and were promptly served eviction notices. Following a significant protest, where two buses full of activists arrived on the landlord's front lawn in Long Island to plead the sisters' case, the landlord and FAC reached a compromise and the sisters gave up their separate

apartments to share one apartment in the same building. My conversations with the FAC revealed the significance of this event:

“I’m sure that one day we will look back at this as a landmark event in the history of the FAC. It was the first really decent, really well-organised and moderately successful protest against an obvious local injustice that we had had for years. We came back from it buzzing, and full of new ideas and motivation to do the same for other tenants in their situation” (FAC’s Director of Organizing, interview, 23rd August 2001).

This “moderately successful” act of resistance to gentrification-induced displacement encouraged the organizing wing of the FAC to set up a ‘Displacement Free Zone’ (DFZ) in Lower Park Slope⁵⁶. The DFZ is of special interest to a geographer studying gentrification, as it is an explicitly spatial response to the process – an area was designated where the FAC trumpeted that there would be ‘no evictions’ of low- and moderate-income tenants, and it was marked out on every block by yellow newspaper bins and posters (Plate 23). Initially a 36-block area in the northern part the neighbourhood, following a two-year trial run the Zone has now been extended north to Flatbush Avenue and as far south to 20th Street, bordered at the sides by Third Avenue and Sixth Avenue. This is triple the size of the initial zone, and actually crosses the southern border of my study area into Sunset Park (Figure 9).

The rationale for the DFZ very much reflects the values of the FAC, as it is geared towards preserving the racial/ethnic/income diversity of the neighbourhood, keeping its housing stock affordable and residents stable in their homes, and respecting the needs of its long-term residents and senior citizens. It actively aims to discourage anyone from what they call ‘profiteering at the expense of our community’ – a reference to people buying a building and then evicting the long-term tenants paying moderate rents either to attract new tenants who can afford much higher rents, or to claim the building back for themselves. The DFZ appeared with the subtitle of ‘A Campaign of Conscience’ – a reference to their attempts to work with local religious leaders to educate the community about the values described above, and ultimately to discourage landlords from what they saw as immoral practices that would

⁵⁶ It should be noted here that the information which follows is derived from several conversations with members of the FAC, and a careful survey of a wealth of discussion documents which were kindly shared with me by the Director of Organizing.

contravene these values. The procedural mechanism which drives the DFZ requires attention, for it helps to clarify both the nature of displacement in the neighbourhood and the type of landlord-tenant dispute which prompts this local resistance to displacement. To begin with, the FAC will consider the case of any tenant who meets the following criteria:

- The tenant lives within the DFZ area
- The tenant lives in a small building that is not protected by the rent laws
- The tenant is low-income
- The tenant is being evicted because the landlord wants to increase the rent dramatically

Priority is given to tenants in the following situations:

- The landlord has other housing and financial options, and is raising the rent simply to increase profits
- The landlord is an absentee owner
- The tenant is a long-time resident of the neighbourhood and/or senior citizen
- The tenant is facing a housing emergency and has no other housing options

The FAC rely on tenants to come forward, as they have no way of tracking large rent increases or incidents of tenants being served eviction notices. If they learn about a rent increase or eviction notice which threatens displacement, their resistance takes on the following dimensions:

- a) They try to negotiate a compromise with the landlord directly
- b) If a compromise is not reached, stronger, more vocal tactics are adopted – they ‘go after landlords’ in one or more of the following ways:
 - work with religious leaders to appeal to the landlord’s conscience (if they have one!) by visitation and writing letters of protest
 - hold demonstrations in front of the landlord’s home
 - picket or boycott the landlord’s business

- generate media attention about the unfairness of eviction

c) If these tactics fail, and the case goes to Housing Court, they have the support of South Brooklyn Legal Services to defend the tenant.

One of the more interesting aspects of the DFZ is that the FAC acknowledge that they are unlikely to prevent an eviction if the landlord will not ‘budge’ - if the case does end up in Housing Court, the tenant will more than likely lose under the rent stabilization laws which facilitate an eviction notice in the first place. The hallmark of the DFZ lies in the idea that extremely vocal and public resistance to displacement might discourage present and especially future landlords from profiteering from Lower Park Slope, and thus prevent many rent increases from happening in the future. The FAC’s Director of Organizing told me that

“our real enemies are the newcomers to the neighbourhood, the young couples who think of this place as more of an investment than a community. We do not want people who come here, buy a building, and evict long-term or elderly tenants in order to get wealthier tenants in from elsewhere, or to deconvert the building into a big home again. The problem is that the legal right to do this is in place, but we argue that the moral right is not in place. The whole point of the Displacement Free Zone is to show prospective building owners that there is more to this neighbourhood than attractive housing and leafy streets – there are people who have been here for generations who have nowhere else to go if they get evicted. We hope that if a potential buyer walks into the neighbourhood and sees the DFZ signs on every block, they will think twice about their purchase, and the same goes for the brokers who tell buyers that they can easily evict tenants” (Interview, 23rd August 2001).

From the outset, the FAC wanted to make it clear that this was not an anti-landlord campaign, but rather a ‘pro-community’ campaign which attempts to create a widespread ‘moral consensus’ that displacement is a serious threat to the ‘stability of the community’. One of the earliest circulated documents drawing attention to the new DFZ summarised the campaign in the following terms:

“Our message is simple: If you are a good landlord, we welcome you to the neighbourhood. But if you intend to harm the neighbourhood, look somewhere else to buy a building because this community will fight to defend its people and its values. With intervention by the community to enforce our community’s values, we know that we will be able to save the qualities that make our neighbourhood special”.

As I shall discuss in the next section, there are problems with this approach, and indeed some of the DFZ tactics can be called into question, but it must be registered that the FAC do make efforts to recognise and even honour those who they call 'good' landlords in the neighbourhood (see Froede, 2000) – that is, those who do not raise the rents to impossible levels in small, unregulated buildings, and who ensure that their tenants are satisfied with the quality of their homes.

The case of the DFZ shows that the FAC fall into a tradition of community organising in America which Fisher (1994) has termed the 'political activist approach'. Within this approach the community is regarded as a potential power base, and

"[t]he community's problem, as defined by the organizers, is the absence of power needed to defend the neighborhood and/or give people more control over their lives. The organized group is generally working or lower class. The organizer's role is first to help the community understand its problem and its potential power and then to mobilize it around this understanding. The strategy of the political activist ranges from consensual to confrontational, but in all cases it is rooted in the presumption of a conflict of interest between the community and those in power" (p.212).

The 'absence of power' in Lower Park Slope stems from tenant immunity to rent stabilization and thus vulnerability to displacement through rent increases. The organized group is exclusively working class, and the FAC advertise their campaign extensively and hold frequent events to help the community understand its problem, such as 'community speak-outs' and 'candy-stuffing parties' (see Figures 12 and 13), where they hope to mobilize latent local sympathies with their cause and generate support. The strategies they use in the DFZ campaign begin with building community consensus, but often become confrontational if a landlord proves particularly objectionable or refuses to change his or her practices. Gentrification and displacement are seen as powerful threats to the community, forces which conflict with the FAC's idea of what a healthy community should be. This is not to say, however, that the FAC can be regarded as a classic model of the political activist approach, and the reason it falls short of archetypal status lies in its class composition and associated approach to class. Fisher argues that most political activist groups seek to "alter the class balance or provide the breeding ground for

What will happen to our community when all the affordable housing is gone?

- Real estate prices are soaring. Rents are out of control.
- Long-time community residents are being forced out.

What can we do to save our neighborhood?

**The Fifth Avenue Committee and
The Displacement Free Zone invite you to a**

COMMUNITY SPEAK-OUT

Date: Sunday, November 18
Time: 4:00 PM
Place: Prospect Park YMCA
357 9th Street
(between 5th Ave. and 6th Ave.)

Childcare will be provided, and refreshments will be served

***For more information, contact
5th Avenue Committee, 141 5th Avenue (718) 857-2990***

Figure 12 - Flyer for a "Community Speak-Out" against gentrification organised by the Fifth Avenue Committee

IS THERE ANY BETTER WAY TO GET INTO
THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT THAN A

CANDY·STUFFING PARTY

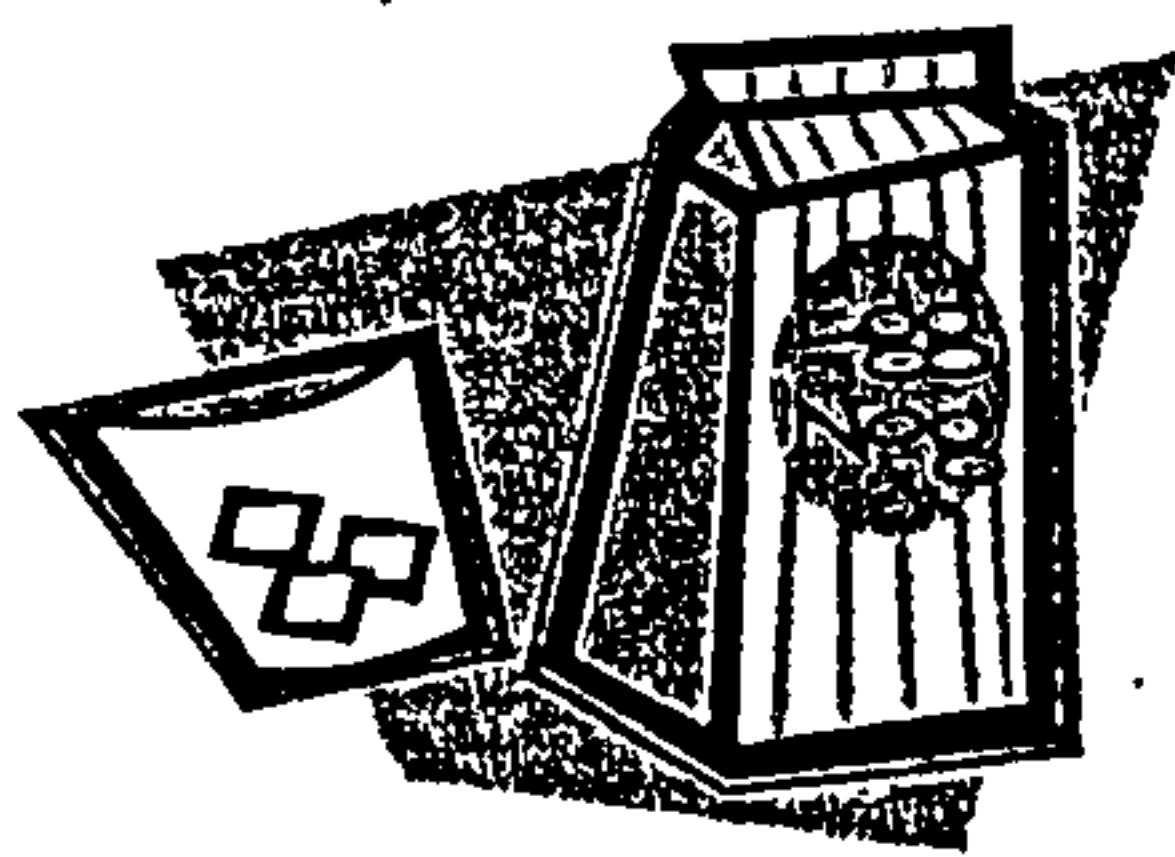
WITH THE DISPLACEMENT FREE ZONE?

WE'VE GOT 10,000 INFORMATIONAL PACKETS TO
STUFF WITH CANDY, AND THEN DISTRIBUTE TO
OUR COMMUNITY. THESE PACKETS WILL INFORM
EVERYONE ABOUT THE DISPLACEMENT FREE ZONE!

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO STUFF THEM!

WHERE: FIFTH AVENUE COMMITTEE
141 5TH AVENUE

WHEN: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20,
6:00-9:00 P.M.



(ENJOY SOME EGG NOG · WITH RUM · WHILE YOU STUFF)

Figure 13 - Flyer for the Fifth Avenue Committee's "Candy-Stuffing Party"
to advertise the Displacement Free Zone

such change” (p.213), but the FAC have a board of directors who by no stretch of the imagination could be described as working class activists seeking to destabilize the class structure of the neighbourhood. The ethos, rather, is one of cooperation between classes, or as Fisher puts it with reference to the ‘social work approach’⁵⁷ to community organising, “a class rapprochement based on a ‘partnership’ between upper-class supporters, social welfare professionals, and working- and lower class neighborhood residents” (p.212). Under such a cooperation, the aim of the DFZ is perhaps more one of neighbourhood protection than neighbourhood transformation, yet the threat of displacement to the status quo is viewed as so severe that the campaign simmers with all the classic leitmotifs of urban political activism – ‘for social justice’, ‘save community’, ‘protecting diversity’, ‘homes not property’, and so on.

This alliance between social classes might seem unlikely in a neighbourhood where social tectonics cause high readings on a different kind of Richter Scale, and it is thus hardly surprising that the DFZ is not without its opponents or its problems, and these will become the focus of the next section as I provide an academic evaluation of this most intriguing effort to resist gentrification.

5.5 Evaluating the Displacement Free Zone⁵⁸

Since November 1999, the DFZ has taken onboard eighteen cases of threatened displacement. This is a rather modest number considering that the FAC argue that displacement is on the way to becoming ‘endemic’ in Lower Park Slope, but they do point to the fact that tenant evictions have dropped by nearly 40% in the Displacement Free Zone since this date. It is unclear how much of this drop is directly related to their activism, but it does suggest some success in deterring present and future landlords from inflicting high rent increases on their tenants. The FAC’s Director of Organizing summarised the eighteen cases as follows:

⁵⁷ Briefly, the social work approach “views the community as a social organism; it focuses on social issues such as building a sense of community, gathering together social service organizations, or lobbying for and delivering social resources” (Fisher, 1994, p.211).

⁵⁸ I must acknowledge here the input of Tamar Rothenburg, who has participated in the FAC’s activities, and from whom I learned a great deal during a short meeting in August 2001.

- 4 were won through direct protest
- 4 were lost after a long protest campaign
- 1 was won through legal action
- 2 were won through legal action and threatened protest
- 1 case was a 'draw' (the tenant found a new, subsidised apartment after a protest)
- 1 case was won after a letter was sent to the landlord
- 5 are ongoing

(E-mail correspondence, January 17th 2003).

More wins than losses is a promising record, and a factor behind the FAC's decision to double the size of the DFZ (the other major factor being stories of rent increases and displacement in the southern section of Lower Park Slope, initially outside the de facto jurisdiction of the DFZ). As the DFZ is both unprecedented and young, these pointers to future successes should not detract from the fact that we can only speculate at this stage whether the DFZ is truly a worthwhile strategy. In fact, it is very difficult to measure its true worth, and it will remain difficult in years to come, because we can never know how many individuals wanting to profit from Lower Park Slope were turned away by the 'campaign of conscience' and the 'no evictions' warnings dotted around the neighbourhood's streets. That said, my experiences with the FAC, however frustratingly sporadic (see Chapter 3), allows me to put forward the following interrelated advantages of the DFZ:

- It increases the *visibility* of the problems caused by gentrification and displacement. Through their extensive efforts to educate the local community about what causes gentrification, and how gentrification leads to displacement, people of different classes, ethnicities and values may have a better understanding of how a process often celebrated in media representations and urban policy rhetoric can actually lead to immense hardship and upheaval for low-income tenants. Greater visibility draws wider attention to the low-income, marginalised population of the neighbourhood as legitimate community members who have as much right to be in Lower Park

Slope as anyone else. One morning I walked around the entire neighbourhood with Martha, the ex-displacee turned FAC tenant organiser, pinning advertisements to hundreds of street posts for an FAC-organised ‘community speak-out’ (Figure 12), and I learned much more about the issue of visibility:

“Let’s say that you don’t know much about gentrification or displacement. You open up the *New York Times* on a Sunday, and read about how fabulous it is that Harlem is now a nicer place to live, that Bill Clinton has an office there, that all these beautiful townhouses are being renovated. Where’s the other side of the double-edged sword? Like, what’s happening to those black folks already there, who don’t earn much? You’re not going to know that if you read the papers. So you go tell others ‘Hey, did you hear Harlem’s a really great place now?’, because that’s what you think, having read the papers, you know? Sure it’s a great place, if you can afford it! So I guess what we are doing here in the Slope is to show that yes, it’s a great place, but a great place without gentrification. We try to show that a community doesn’t need gentrification for it to be saved, and that gentrification is not this great thing that makes a place better. People get thrown out of their apartments because of gentrification, like I did” (interview, 13th November 2001).

While Martha’s besmirchment of gentrification is undoubtedly impacted by her own experiences as a displaced tenant, it is difficult to disagree with her, and difficult to do anything but admire the determination of the FAC to raise awareness of gentrification’s flipside. The FAC count the publicity that they generate as more important than figures on wins and losses within the DFZ.

- As it requires low-income tenants to come forward with their stories of threatened displacement, it may draw them into organizing, mobilizing a latent pool of community labour and propelling tenants into political activism for not only their own causes, but for the cause of other tenants in similar situations. At the community speak-out I addressed on 18th November 2001, I was struck by how it was not just a chance for the FAC to rally around for local support, but also a chance to get more people involved with their political activism. Indeed, the meeting ended with the Director of Organizing asking attendees to come forward with their contact details if they wanted to join a protest against a landlord who had levied an excessive rent increase on a seriously ill tenant who told his story at the meeting. I was impressed that nobody was forced to join in, or emotionally blackmailed – it was simple,

honest and effective, and many people volunteered their voices for the protest.

- It is a considerable step forward in the efforts of numerous community organisations in the United States to demonstrate that property is not just a financial asset – it is also a home for tenants, and therefore has a critically important use value which far outweighs its exchange (market) value. As Squires (1992) has pointed out, housing should be “treated as a public need and entitlement rather than as a private good to be obtained by the market” (p.30). The obstacles to the Marxist-inspired decommodification of housing are enormous, for “such an approach clearly contradicts the strong ideological beliefs that have shaped public policy generally *and housing policy in particular* throughout U.S. history” (ibid. p.30, my emphasis). Several years ago, Achtenberg and Marcuse (1986) pointed out the need for

“a program that can alter the terms of existing public debate on housing, that challenges the commodity nature of housing and its role in our economic and social system, and demonstrates how people’s legitimate housing needs can be met through an alternative approach” (p.475).

While the DFZ per se is too localised and displacement-specific to become this program, it is a useful template for a wider scheme, as it puts under the spotlight those for whom a building’s exchange value is irrelevant and its commodification harmful, thus increasing awareness both within and beyond the neighbourhood that there is more to housing than its sale price.

- Throughout this discussion I have reiterated the main purpose of the DFZ, which is to discourage new landlords from buying houses in the neighbourhood solely for the purposes of real estate investment. While difficult to quantify, there is a possibility that some landlords may be discouraged because of the likelihood that any evictions of low-income tenants would pit them directly against the FAC, who profess to be the voice of the community. It may prove financially harmful and emotionally disturbing for a landlord to experience the wrath of a team of activists who will do anything it takes within the realms of the DFZ campaign and the law to stop an eviction from occurring. Not many landlords would relish the

prospect of seeing pickets outside their home or business, or enjoy being featured in the local and city media as someone ‘harming’ the community.

Because of its politicised nature, and indeed its direct connection to gentrification, a subject which has an uneasy relationship with New Yorkers, the DFZ cannot be and is not without its problems. From a close examination of both its mechanism of protest and a few highly publicised cases in its short history, it can be called into question along the following lines:

- It works on the presumption that everyone in the community will or eventually will share the same (somehow superior) ‘moral values’ of the FAC. Morality is a fluid concept, and few people, if any, share precisely the same moral values – to assume that they do or that they one day will through community ‘education’ is rather optimistic. While local religious leaders are very much involved in this attempt to expose the ‘immorality’ of evicting a tenant to raise a rent, which is a source of solace for a Hispanic community with a strong reliance on the moral guidance (and political weight) of the clergy in the neighbourhood, this strategy is questionable in that it assumes that the landlord will harbour a guilty conscience about evicting a tenant. As was pointed out by a tenant advocate quoted in *The Village Voice*, “Landlords as a group have the smallest conscience I have ever seen. I mean, there’s conscience and there’s money, and money is a very powerful thing” (quoted in Lobbia, 1999). In another media account of the DFZ, a real estate broker was a voice in concert with the tenant advocate, saying “Some people can’t be embarrassed.They are out to make money, and no level of humiliation, intimidation or picketing will stop these landlords” (quoted in Hussey, 1999).
- The vocal, reactionary tactics of the DFZ may serve to alienate prospective landlords, owner-occupiers or incoming higher-income tenants who may in fact be community minded, thus creating a more divided community than it already is, as I showed in my discussion of social tectonics. The FAC maintain that the DFZ is not an ‘anti-landlord’ campaign, yet some of the comments which have appeared in the media, and indeed the tactics they

adopt, suggest otherwise. In the same Village Voice article, one FAC staff member was quoted as follows:

“We’ll let buyers know that if they want to kick people out just to raise the rents, they’re not welcome here. *We will go after them, we will make their lives really unpleasant*, and hope that any other landlord who is contemplating this same thing will think twice” (quoted in Lobbia, 1999, my emphasis).

In a very recent case to come under the auspices of the DFZ, another organizer told a rally in front of the building

“The main reason that we are gathered here today, is to let all the new landlords and old landlords...all over Park Slope know that this cannot happen. We want to let Miss Weinberger [the landlord in question] know we’ll be back” (quoted in Maniscalco, 2002).

If the FAC are to communicate effectively that they are not anti-landlord, it would seem that some revision of their mildly threatening language may be appropriate. As Hussey (1999) has pointed out with respect to Lower Park Slope’s gentrification, “not all the players are greedy”, and indeed the FAC recognise that the problem is not one of evil landlords but a market-driven system which privileges the twin ideals of home-ownership and gentrification. Perhaps greater attention to how more landlords, homeowners and wealthier tenants could be included in their activities rather than simply vilified would confirm that they are as pro-community as they insist.

- One of the more obvious matters not subject to any form of resistance by the DFZ concerns a major force behind the escalating housing costs in the neighbourhood. The DFZ is not an attempt to scrutinise the real estate industry’s impact on the gentrification of Lower Park Slope, which could be viewed as an oversight considering the recent work by gentrification researchers who have argued that post-recession gentrification is inextricably connected to the speculative activities of local realtor groups with global connections (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Lees, 2000; Hackworth, 2001; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). One cannot ignore the possibility that a vocal campaign outside the offices of realtors in the neighbourhood might be as useful as a protest outside a landlord’s home or business. Landlords cannot

work to buy property and evict people alone – they need assistance from the people who advertise a property, negotiate a transaction, and advise on its future function. The DFZ is operating without resistance to arguably the key players in the gentrification of Lower Park Slope. This was noted by one of my interviewees:

“I do worry that the Fifth Avenue Committee might be going after the wrong people. There wouldn’t be any landlords kicking people out onto the street if they weren’t under the spell of the realtors. I think it’s the realtors who should be their target. These guys have done a damn fine job of wrecking Park Slope with their greedy speculating, their appearance on every corner, their ridiculous prices and profits, and all this ‘Prime Slope’, ‘Center Slope’ stuff. They are the ones who are to blame for tenant evictions, because they encourage a new building owner to deconvert their property to increase its value. So why aren’t the FAC going after them? I don’t get it”. (Jeff, interview, 9th December 2001).

- Furthermore, the DFZ does not direct any of its energy towards elected officials to change rent regulations on buildings with less than six units, or campaign to build more affordable rental housing in the neighbourhood. While the latter is more the concern of the development wing of the FAC, who have a very successful record in lobbying for funding for affordable housing, it is nevertheless an ingredient in the gentrification elixir. As the DFZ are so keen for media attention, it seems strange that they do not mention the lack of affordable housing construction more often in their comments to journalists. The former, however, does seem a disappointing omission. The displacement so lamented by the DFZ would not be anything like as widespread or serious an issue if rent stabilization was extended to the small buildings of Lower Park Slope. When I quizzed the Director of Organizing on this issue, he replied:

“We are doing some work on the rent laws, which are absolutely crucial. ...It is, at this moment, politically impossible to extend rent regulation to smaller buildings. A bill has floated around Albany [the State Capital] for a long time with no success, and its future prospects also seem dim. The DFZ tries to act locally because we cannot be effective at a State level” (interview, Nov. 26th 2001).

These comments should not be treated as defeatist, however. In a recent conference partly convened by the FAC entitled 'Displacement: What To Do About It', one of the strategies put forward was

"to grant tax incentives to owners of non-rent regulated buildings under six units to rent apartments below market-levels. This program seeks to promote the provision of affordable housing in the non-regulated market by minimizing the financial loss to landlords who make units available at below market levels. The program will discourage residential displacement in gentrifying areas because it will reduce the financial incentives to evict existing tenants" (TPCMAS/FAC/ANHD, 2001, p.7).

On the surface this may come across as a sensible, realistic strategy, but on the next page of this document it is projected that such tax incentives would cost the State of New York \$15 million per year (ibid. p.8). While "[i]nitial reactions from State legislators introduced to the plan have been positive", one has to wonder what the reaction would be should this proposal be taken seriously in the legislature at a future date, especially as many State legislators would probably argue that it costs nothing to the taxpayer to maintain the status quo. With this in mind, one has to wonder that however bleak the prospects appear for rent stabilization on small buildings, the time and energy that goes into the DFZ may only yield limited success if it does not engage more directly with the political forces which lead to displacement of tenants. As the FAC cannot alone be effective at State level, might it not be a good idea to use its organizing talents to generate wider support across New York City for a radical revamp to rent stabilization?

None of these criticisms, however, should detract from the DFZ's genuine promise and originality. Other community groups in New York City such as Fort Greene Together and the Lower East Side Anti-Displacement Coalition are considering DFZs of their own (McCarthy, 2001), which is a testament to the determination of the FAC's organizers and the DFZ's impressive debut. Perhaps the most unexpected and encouraging feature of the whole campaign is the fact that displacement is being addressed and might be curtailed by the skills and political clout of some of the compassionate middle-class who exist in the neighbourhood, and in dialogue with many working class residents. For a neighbourhood beset by the tensions of social

tectonics, it is a remarkable achievement that such a dialogue exists. The FAC's open community meetings and publicity events are usually well attended, as indeed have been their protests, and there was a real sense of collective determination to stop displacement from getting out of hand.

Towards the end of my time in Lower Park Slope, I was invited to a Christmas 'candy-stuffing party' (Figure 13) organised by the FAC, where guests received unlimited glasses of egg-nog with rum and platefuls of snacks in return for packing thousands of little informational packets about the DFZ with a piece of candy, to be distributed around the neighbourhood to raise awareness of gentrification and displacement. I spent a memorable few hours sitting around a table talking to local residents and activists whilst stuffing candy, and was struck by the remarkable optimism that came from the co-operation of different residents from all walks of life. The offices of the FAC were buzzing with the atmosphere generated by neighbourhood activism at its very best - cooperative, inclusive, innovative and genuinely enthusiastic about the possibility for social change. As I walked home, also buzzing (from one of the most enjoyable occasions of my Ph.D research), I thought about the ways in which the resistance I had just witnessed (and participated in) matched the perspective that has emerged from scholarly accounts of resistance to gentrification in American cities (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Smith, 1996). The answer is, of course, that it didn't sit at all well with these earlier accounts. When I arrived home, I wrote this (unabridged) entry in my fieldwork notebook:

"The DFZ is wildly different from everything I have ever read about concerning resistance to gentrification in America. It is not at all militant, not at all spontaneous, and even when confrontational protests occur they are not unpleasant or chaotic. It is as much middle-class as it is working class, and there is no sense of the despair that leads to reactionary protest; rather a sense of profound optimism and real belief that things are going to change if they keep hammering away with this message that gentrification is bad. The DFZ is a hugely encouraging attempt to curb the causes and effects of change over which they have no control, through a well conceived and executed plan to bring into light the enduring predicament of displacement" (notebook entry, 20th December 2001).

It is when I reflect on action research with the FAC that I am troubled by the arguments of Hackworth and Smith (2001). With respect to the current state of activism against gentrification in New York City, they maintain that

“effective resistance to gentrification has declined as the working class is continually displaced from the inner city, and as the most militant anti-gentrification groups of the 1980s morph into housing service providers” (p.468).

While most local researchers familiar with the difficulties of progressive community organisation under the Giuliani administration would agree with these authors that there has been a “palpable decline in community opposition” (p.475), the case of the DFZ in Lower Park Slope illustrates that it would be a mistake to argue that effective resistance has vanished completely, and misleading to imply that it is only the working class who are involved in resistance to gentrification. Indeed, the FAC are ‘housing service providers’ to a considerable degree, but I have shown that, tensions between organization and development aside, housing provision is not their only function – in fact, far from it. The FAC learned a hard lesson from their role in the physical improvement of Lower Park Slope, and while it is too early to say whether their DFZ will fill the void left by the absence of ‘effective resistance’ which Hackworth and Smith lament, early indications suggest a campaign of real promise which is generating interest outside the neighbourhood’s borders.

In a recent commentary lamenting the absence of effective ‘urban redevelopment movements’ (which we can read as a pseudonym for community activism) in the United States, Wilson and Grammenos (2000) offer an explanation why the activism and ‘group consciousness’ of the 1960s has been eroded:

“[T]oday the mix of postindustrialism and globalization has devastated urban redevelopment movements. Organising people has reached a new low, real estate capital has shown itself resistant to grassroots social pressures, investors flaunt their mobility and leverage vast amounts of municipal resources, the motors that propel accumulation now operate at an international scale, and people struggle to understand a hyper-fast and complexly signified and ascripted world” (p.361).

There can be little doubt that the persistence of neoliberal urbanism makes for frustrating times for community activists, but we must be reminded that regardless of the political zeitgeist,

“[t]he effectiveness of neighborhood organizations depends on the entrepreneurial abilities and political connections of their leaders. It depends also on general community characteristics to the extent that a particular district has a population containing activists” (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1991, p.321).

With the arrival of post-recession gentrification, the dragon to be slain is no longer the artistic and culture industries facilitating the flow of capital into disinvested neighbourhoods, but rather local realtors and some profiteering landlords and investors capitalizing on the absence of rent regulation. This has restructured Lower Park Slope into a profitable neighbour of Upper Park Slope, at the expense of many of its long-term residents. While I believe that the FAC could do more to challenge this new dragon directly, their efforts to raise awareness of displacement may go some way towards this particular district experiencing an increase in its population of activists. Part of the problem with some earlier accounts of gentrification in the New York City area is that they presented a caricature of the middle-class as evil gentrifiers intent on taking back entire neighbourhoods for their own use and profit (Barry and Derevlany, 1987; Abu-Lughod, 1994; Smith, 1996). Through the language used in these accounts, *all* middle-classes were frozen into a space which effectively silenced them, without respect for those who do not harbour revengeful sentiments, and without questioning the potential of the more compassionate, liberal middle-class who do exist in the city to engage in activism against a process which many of them would probably agree has gone too far. The Park Slope area is renowned for its liberal, tolerant values (Rothenburg, 1995), and it can only be a positive sign, as well as a sign of the power of post-recession gentrification, that many middle-class people are now involved in the struggle against a process in which they are usually seen to be the beneficiaries.

CHAPTER 6 - GENTRIFICATION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: THE GEOGRAPHY OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

“Comparative researchers cannot assume that their own countries, or those of others, are characterised on the basis of a single culture or shared value-consensus. This allows for a continuum between difference and similarity which is open to comparative empirical examination” (May, 1997, p.193).

“[T]he most formidable challenge in comparative work is the exercise of synthesis – to make linkages among economic, social and political domains that more analytic and less adventurous minds have been grateful to leave unconnected” (Ley, 2001, p.154).

The task of international comparison is indeed formidable and a completely thorough synthesis of the material in the two preceding chapters requires far more space than is available here. This chapter, then, will take the form of a detailed series of *summaries* of the main similarities and differences which can be discerned from a close reading of South Parkdale’s and Lower Park Slope’s gentrification. I thus add something to Tilly’s (1984) definition of what he calls ‘variation-finding comparisons’, where the goal is “to establish a principle of variation in the character and intensity of a phenomenon by examining systematic differences among instances” (p.83). For this chapter, we can paraphrase and modify this goal as follows: I am interested in establishing a principle of variation in the character and intensity of the phenomenon of gentrification by examining systematic similarities and differences among two instances of the phenomenon. As the first quotation which begins this chapter supports, I do not think it either possible or sensible to assess differences among instances without assessing similarities – to look only for the former is to assume the absence of the latter, to miss a key part of the equation, and to obscure the geography of gentrification. It is perhaps understandable that difference has been a priority in much recent comparative research (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1999; Body-Gendrot, 2000; Keil, 2000; see Brenner, 2001, for a review); one need only look at the homogenisation of global cities in the form of Starbucks, McDonalds and shopping malls to feel the need to uncover what differences remain. In addition, the advent of postmodernism in social science called for a much greater sensitivity to difference and diversity than earlier traditions of positivism and

Marxism. But the key (simple) question remains – how can a wide-ranging comparison of gentrification, which I promised in Chapter 2, only reveal what is different between two places? As Ley's words at the start of this chapter make very clear, the real challenge of comparative work is to make *linkages* between various domains, or in this case, linkages between the various domains that make up the multi-faceted process of gentrification.

This chapter will begin by discussing the similarities in the gentrification of both neighbourhoods, before setting out what is different about each instance of gentrification. If this seems too simplistic a way to present what are clearly two very complex instances of gentrification, I argue that a *purposeful* simplicity is in fact the intent – only in this manner can I illustrate what Jacobs and Fincher (1998) strikingly call “the complexity of spatial scales that flow through ‘place’: the ways in which the local is always also a national or international space” (p.21). While some radical scholars have argued for a Lefebvrian-tinged analytical framework which focuses on the production of a wide range of mutually constitutive geographical scales (Herod, 1991; Smith, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997; Harvey, 2000; Brenner, 2001), it is simply too ambitious to concentrate on scales as small as the body in a comparative study of gentrification. I thus direct my attention towards three particular geographical scales – the local, the national and the global, all three of which are fundamental concerns of this contribution to the geography of gentrification. These scales cannot be separated from each other, nor can they be considered as fixed or of equal influence in the process of gentrification. They are periodically being made and transformed, and it is through this restless (re)production of scale that we can grasp an understanding of the workings of gentrification in both Lower Park Slope and South Parkdale. As Delaney and Leitner (1997) point out, “geographic scale....is socially constructed rather than ontologically pre-given,the geographic scales constructed are themselves implicated in the constitution of social, economic and political processes” (p.93). There can be little doubt that gentrification is one such process, and furthermore a process of socio-spatial change; following Marston (2000), the goal here is “to understand how particular scales become constituted and transformed in response to social-spatial *dynamics*” (p.221, emphasis added).

Not only does a purposeful simplicity allow for an appreciation of geographical scale, it also creates space for an argument I made in Chapter 2 – that gentrification cannot be considered from a one-sided perspective, and that rehashing old theoretical debates and divisions is simply unnecessary. This chapter will demonstrate the theoretical importance of a theoretically inclusive framework, and will show that arguing about which theory has more explanatory merit is not a progressive direction for gentrification research to take. As was stressed by Clark (1992), Lees (1994a) and most recently, Butler and Robson (2001), a complementary rather than reductionist perspective on gentrification allows for a sensitive illustration of the process, particularly its geography, and comparative work provides an excellent opportunity to amplify the very significant epistemological benefits of complementarity.

6.1 Similarities

6.1.1 The history of capital investment, disinvestment and reinvestment

A careful review of my narratives of South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope leads to the observation that both neighbourhoods exhibit the cyclical history of capital investment, disinvestment and reinvestment in the built environment that has become a theoretical linchpin (yet by no means an exclusive one) in understanding the production of urban space for more affluent dwellers (e.g. Smith, 1979, 1986, 1996; Smith, Reid and Duncan, 1994). It should be stressed that my understanding of this history is not as comprehensive as it could be – it takes a significant project of its own, with a comprehensive grasp of the contradictory frameworks and ideologies of Marxian and neo-classical economics, to address such concerns, as Clark (1987) showed in his landmark study of the rent-gap in Malmo, Sweden. However, looking at the evidence I did gather I am confident that an appreciation of inflows and outflows of capital into my two case-study neighbourhoods is central to understanding how they reached their current gentrifying status. As the ensuing discussion will demonstrate, while there are some differences in the geographical scaling of capital flows, the broad similarities in investment cycles cannot be discounted.

South Parkdale's investment cycle is the more obvious of the two – a neighbourhood that was once largely a wealthy enclave with palatial homes occupied by Toronto's merchant elite ('The Village of Parkdale') experienced dramatic, rapid disinvestment following the post-World War II construction of an expressway through its southernmost reaches, under the banner of 'urban renewal' for the common good. The Gardiner Expressway set in motion a chain of events leading to the near-wholesale devalorization of inner-city space – from owner-occupation to tenancy; from exchange value to use value; from single-family homes to high-rise apartment blocks, rooming houses and bachelorettes; from landlordism to slumlordism; from occupation to abandonment; from upper class, mostly white residents to working class immigrant and deinstitutionalized residents. Following sporadic reinvestment in South Parkdale during the mid- to late-1980s property boom, the post-recession 1990s have seen a quickening in the pace of capital flows, where the neighbourhood's potential value has been recognised by a matrix of middle-class gentrifiers, landlord developers (raising the rents after property rehabilitation to attract wealthier tenants), and artists investing in studio spaces because of a lack of affordable options elsewhere. The actions of this matrix have been facilitated by Provincial government policy and actively encouraged by City government policy, a tacit policy collaboration, and a key point to be taken up later in this chapter.

With respect to geographical scale, Chapter 4 focused largely on the impacts of capital flows as they affect the local scale, so some comments are required on the national and global scales of the investment cycle. The former is particularly glaring in terms of South Parkdale's disinvestment era – the Gardiner Expressway is a classic material example of both the outward suburban expansion ideology running through the Canadian psyche in the 1950s and '60s (as expressed in the growth of suburbs in all large cities in the nation during this period), and the pressing need for Canada to forge closer economic links with its hugely influential neighbouring country to the south, for the Expressway was also designed to link Toronto with cities such as Buffalo and Detroit. National priorities thus had substantial effects on local geographies, and vice versa – South Parkdale was initially subservient to the Canadian 'common interest', but this situation was reversed in the 1970s as the sorry fate of the neighbourhood became a reference point in the 'reform era' across Canada, which began in Toronto. South Parkdale's story, *inter alia*, reminded

Canadians of the value of inner-city neighbourhoods, and of the harm of suburban expansion at the expense of the inner city. When considering the global scale of post-recession gentrification, I find it very difficult to support Hackworth and Smith's (2001) assertion that reinvestment is "more linked to large-scale capital than ever" (p.467) and that "restructuring and globalisation in the real estate industry has set a context for larger developers becoming involved in gentrifying neighbourhoods.....they are now increasingly the first to orchestrate reinvestment" (p.468). This is simply not the case in South Parkdale. Large scale capital attempting to penetrate the neighbourhood's borders encounters a very considerable barrier – the reputation of the neighbourhood, or 'the discourse of decline in the liveable city' as I called it in Chapter 4. This is not to say that "larger developers" are entirely absent, as exemplified by a small number of 'loft-living' developments in some previously abandoned industrial spaces, but to say that globalised real estate practices are the main instigators of gentrification would be incorrect in the South Parkdale case. I am drawn here to an interview I conducted with a realtor employed by a group with offices across North America:

"The biggest problems I encounter trying to sell houses in Parkdale? Well, that has to be convincing my clients that they are not going to get attacked by a distressed patient who has just been released from Queen Street, or get accosted by a prostitute or a drug dealer every time they step outside their front door. This might have been the case about 15 years ago, I don't know, but right now there is much less to worry about. However, a bad rep[utation] takes a long time to go away. Think of it this way – say if you're released from a long period in jail, people aren't really gonna trust you 'till you prove yourself to be trustworthy. It's the same here – South Parkdale is not trusted, as it's coming out of a long period in the wilderness, so I guess the hardest part of my job is to convince people that they can trust it again" (Michael, interview, 21st February 2001).

Salient words, and comments which cast light on the fact that large scale developers, contra Hackworth and Smith, are *not* the first to "orchestrate" reinvestment – in fact, they might well be the last, if and when the poor reputation of the neighbourhood is completely eradicated. The global scale of reinvestment, while not absent, is not yet the most tangible scale illuminated by South Parkdale's gentrification.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Indeed, as I pointed out to a colleague to whom I gave a tour of the neighbourhood, one would be hard pressed to find signs of the local manifestations of globalisation – it's one of the few neighbourhoods in downtown Toronto where there is no Starbucks (yet)!! Simplistic, perhaps, but not to the point of being irrelevant.

Lower Park Slope has a similar investment cycle, albeit with different intensities of investment. It began life as the poorer section of Park Slope, but was by no means poverty stricken, housing the servants of wealthier merchants further up the hill, storeowners and tradespersons, and workers at both the Gowanus docks and the Ansonia Clock Factory. The neighbourhood's economic decline began during the 1930s Depression, a time of redundancies, unemployment and uncertainty which hit New York City particularly hard (cf. Abu-Lughod, 1999). Following World War II, almost all of Brooklyn experienced systematic disinvestment and devalorisation (though geographically uneven within the borough) – quite simply, a devastating chain reaction of events lasting for three decades which led to massive 'white flight', blockbusting and 'blow-out', redlining and substantial residential abandonment, and all the social tensions accompanying the withdrawal of so many factors vital to the health of inner city spaces. Reinvestment was rather more pedestrian in Lower Park Slope compared to the wholesale gentrification of the section of Park Slope closest to Prospect Park, the latter being well documented by others (Lees, 1994a; Carpenter and Lees, 1995) and explained as a marriage of private and public sector forces aiding the physical and social recapturing of the neighbourhood's wealthy past. Reinvestment in Lower Park Slope has really taken off in the 1990s as a direct consequence of the super-gentrification of so many New York neighbourhoods.

The interpenetration of the local and global scales of gentrification is pronounced in Lower Park Slope, and here we can see that Hackworth and Smith's (2001) claims of a globalised real estate industry driving gentrification are *especially specific to New York*, and thus given the discussion of South Parkdale above I am suspicious of their "wider applicability" (p.466). As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the impact of globally-linked real estate practices on the local spaces of Lower Park Slope is significant, to the extent that the entire neighbourhood is being redesignated into many different kinds of 'Slope' by realtors with the intent of marketing what was not traditionally considered Park Slope to prospective home buyers and wealthier tenants. This is the driving force behind 'overspill' gentrification, and it is particularly worrying to have learned that many realtors are encouraging new homeowners to raise rents to maximise profitability and returns on their investments. The global thus affects the local, as a neighbourhood's social life is placed under stress from the string of globally-driven displacements which adversely affect and

threaten a long-standing (yet changing) Hispanic local community. While it is likely that some landlords have been discouraged from raising rents by the Displacement Free Zone, only time will tell how much the local will in turn affect the global, and I think a successful resistance to global capital will depend on the organisers of the Fifth Avenue Committee targeting realtors as much as they target landlords – only then can the scale of reinvestment be reconfigured. The national scale of reinvestment is more difficult to discern, partly because New York City tends to dance to its own tune, and when matters are beyond its administrative control it is dependent more on regional policies, the State of New York's rent legislation being a particularly relevant example. If, however, we consider gentrification as a quintessentially historical urban phenomenon, where the present is the key to the past, then the national scale is more than evident in its era of disinvestment, just as in South Parkdale. Disinvestment in Brooklyn's neighbourhoods was underwritten by *federal* (national) policies which encouraged white flight, suburbanisation at the expense of the inner city, redlining and abandonment – the vital policy mechanism which opened Smithian rent-gaps and set the stage for reinvestment at the local and (later) the global scales.

6.1.2 The expansion of the professional middle-classes who desire central city locations

The appeal to view gentrification from both the production and consumption sides of the fence, frequently and inexplicably ignored among some gentrification researchers, is given considerable epistemological muscle by this empirical research, because both South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope's gentrification cannot be reduced solely to cycles of investment in the built environment. Gentrification in both these neighbourhoods is as much about the expanding pool of professional middle-class gentrifiers with preferences for central city living as it is about the production of central city space for them. In these two cities, as in other large advanced capitalist cities, a significant and sustained transformation has taken place since the 1960s - the movement from a manufacturing-based 'industrial' economy to a service-based 'postindustrial' economy, and a concomitant transformation of the occupational strata where a proliferation of working class manual occupations has been supplanted by a proliferation of middle-class professional, managerial and

technical occupations requiring a highly educated and highly skilled background (Ley, 1980, 1986, 1996a; Hamnett, 1991, 2000, 2002; Butler, 1997). The transformation is more pronounced in New York City, where such is the magnitude of 'professionalisation' that, together with the march of global capital, so many neighbourhoods which gentrified in earlier decades have now become unaffordable to all but the very wealthy. Lower Park Slope's overspill gentrification is the spatial expression of this trend, as the Park Slope which gentrified much earlier has become saturated with very wealthy homeowners and tenants, and this saturation forces incoming middle-classes to look elsewhere for residences. This is a trend that has been noted by researchers working in other New York neighbourhoods such as Fort Greene (Curran, 2001), Brooklyn Heights (Lees, 2000), Clinton (Hackworth, 2002) and parts of the Lower East Side (Smith and DeFilippis, 1999). With respect to professionalisation in South Parkdale, the descriptive data presented in Tables 6 to 9 does not suggest an influx of more affluent dwellers into the neighbourhood, but as I argued, such data cannot capture a trend in its infancy, and there is little question of the expansion of middle-class, professional occupations in Toronto as a whole since the 1960s (Ley, 1996a; Murdie, 1996; Walks, 2001). Given their purchasing power, this may well lead to super-gentrification and large-scale overspill into South Parkdale in the future should its poor reputation disintegrate further. In addition, the gentrifiers who agreed to talk to me all were highly educated, and had professional, managerial or technical occupations; such people were a rarity in South Parkdale two decades ago – it was one of the few 'no-go' areas for the middle-class in the city. In sum, professionalisation is a global and national phenomenon that has its local outcome in the process of gentrification, and while the extent of professionalisation is different in each case, it is very much the catapult behind the influx of gentrifiers. The interplay between these geographical scales with respect to professionalisation is always and everywhere very clear – resultant gentrification is usually welcomed by municipalities and by the media as a neighbourhood 'improves' both physically and economically, so the local feeds back into the national and the global to set in motion a cycle of continuity – national and global policies to perpetuate the expansion of the middle-classes are driven to some degree by the perceived positive events happening at a local level.

Qualitative evidence collected from both neighbourhoods demonstrated that professionalisation forms the backdrop to the middle-class desire for residence in them. In Toronto, the lasting influence of the reform era has resulted in a tangible affection for ‘old-city’ places explained most vividly by Caulfield (1989, 1994), and South Parkdale is increasingly becoming one of the few such places left in central Toronto for the consolidation of urban (as opposed to suburban) sensibilities among the middle-classes. This is most obvious in the drive to return to ‘Parkdale Village, 1879’, where an architectural heritage is promoted, and where artists and their patrons become key players in the gradual erosion of the area’s immediate traumatised past. In Lower Park Slope, many gentrifiers spoke of their growing affection for New York City and particularly Brooklyn, the latter almost always lauded with negative reference to the city’s four other boroughs! While many also seemed frustrated that the area was one of the few remaining affordable options, frustrations were ameliorated by their enjoyment of urban life in close proximity to one of New York’s most celebrated neighbourhoods (gentrified Park Slope), with its many cultural amenities and particularly its fine primary schools – the latter rare in Brooklyn. As a closing caveat to this subsection, tales of consumer preferences, while an important aspect of gentrification, should not be overdrawn, for there are many other (largely economic) factors required to allow for the realisation of consumer preferences. Such is the importance of a complementary theoretical perspective towards the study of gentrification.

6.1.3 The influence of extralocal policy on local rent regulation, and the associated crises of affordable rental housing

One of the more striking similarities between these two case studies concerns legislation on rent in both cities, enforced by external authorities who otherwise have little direct say in the fortunes of the neighbourhood. In Chapters 4 and 5 I argued that the lack of rent regulation is a motor behind the gentrification of both South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope, because landlords have few barriers in place to stop them raising the rents and evicting a poorer tenant for the purpose of either attracting a wealthier (gentrifier) tenant or to deconvert the property in question back into a single family home. In Toronto this is a very recent affair – the Ontario Provincial government introduced ‘vacancy decontrol’ in 1997, which allows a landlord to

charge whatever he or she thinks they can make on a unit once it becomes vacant. This has led to a staggering citywide increase in applications for rent increases above the enforced guidelines (to place pressure on the existing tenant to move so rents can be dramatically increased), and an equally alarming Province-wide increase in applications for the eviction of a tenant. At the neighbourhood level, qualitative evidence provided distressing tales of tenant hardship under this legislation, hardship which we can expect to intensify if gentrification accelerates further and vacancy decontrol remains in place. In New York City, the situation is far more complex, for rent stabilization laws were devised much earlier, in the late 1960s, and have a very narrow and somewhat bewildering set of criteria for building eligibility, enforced by the State legislature in Albany. Lower Park Slope's housing stock, built mostly before 1947 and almost exclusively containing buildings with less than six units, is not widely covered by rent stabilization, meaning that tenants are at the mercy of landlords who may raise the rent to whatever figure they desire once an annual lease has expired. Tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods have also been affected by the 1997 New York State Rent Regulation Reform Act, which introduced vacancy control on apartments in Manhattan renting above \$2000 a month. This has made much of Manhattan's housing stock even less affordable than it was before, forcing middle-classes out into gentrifying neighbourhoods in the outer boroughs, and adding to displacement pressures in those neighbourhoods.

The disconcerting stories of displacement I provided in earlier chapters, while illustrative of the threat of gentrification to working class tenants, perhaps have obscured the important politics of scale behind the lack of rent regulation in both neighbourhoods. The changes to local urban space one can witness in South Parkdale are in part a consequence of a national crisis of affordable housing, which disproportionately harms the largest cities in the nation (Layton, 2000). Consistently unable to acquire Federal government funds for affordable rental housing construction, vacancy decontrol was introduced by the Provincial government to 'encourage' the private sector to invest the resultant higher revenues in such construction. However, it is rarely profitable to build and manage affordable housing, which partly explains the proliferation of luxury housing developments across the city since vacancy decontrol was introduced. The local scale is thus affected by the national - South Parkdale's low income tenants end up suffering as a

consequence; if they are evicted, their prospects for finding affordable rental housing are very bleak, which becomes a national concern (Dear and Wolch, 1993; Peressini and McDonald, 2000). Similar scalar tensions can be discerned from the situation in Lower Park Slope – it is bordering on impossible to convince the State legislature to extend rent stabilization to buildings with fewer than six units, largely because the State argue that the Federal (national) government *are* committed to building affordable housing in the city, using both the recent ‘10-year plan’ (van Ryzin and Genn, 1999) and the fact that two million rental units in the city are subsidised by some level of government (van Ryzin and Kamber, 2002) as concrete evidence to reject pleas for further regulation. However, the national scale is likely to be of little consolation to those affected at the local scale – given the city’s continuing affordable housing crisis, finding alternative affordable rental housing is no straightforward task for a displaced tenant. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the possibility that widespread gentrification is costing both cities much of their current affordable housing stock, but this must remain a suspicion rather than a fact until backed up in a more wide-ranging assessment of citywide housing economics. That said, the work of Wyly and Hammel (1999, 2001, 2002) in eight different US cities provides important empirical evidence to demonstrate the threats made by gentrification to the permanence of affordable housing. Finally, one cannot round off a discussion of rent deregulation without some reference to the impact of neoliberalism on urban space. The two case studies are indicative of “the marked deepening of the process of neoliberalization on an international, if not global, scale” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.399). As these authors argue, the hallmark of current ‘roll-out neoliberalism’ is regulatory reform under an authoritarian yet minimally interfering state. It is no coincidence that significant reforms to rent regulations have been made in recent years, giving more power to the private market and removing public policy constraints on gentrification to encourage middle-class colonisation of the inner-city and associated homeownership in favour of tenancy. I am thus led to agree with Neil Smith (2002b) that gentrification is “the consummate urban expression of an emerging neo-liberalism” (p.16), filling the vacuum left by the economic failures of 1970s and 1980s liberal urban policy.

6.1.4 Landlord-tenant struggles, and qualitative evidence of displacement

Among the symptoms of gentrification, directly related to the relaxation of restrictions on rent increases, are the conflicts that frequently occur between landlords and low-income tenants. When carrying out this research, I was struck by how little time it took to make contact with tenants who had either been displaced or living with the threat of displacement, not at all what I expected after reading other accounts of displacement (e.g. Atkinson, 2000a, 2000b). In Lower Park Slope, such tenants were the first to come forward to be interviewed after I had advertised for respondents around the neighbourhood, and in South Parkdale, the magnitude of the problem was all too apparent following my first visit to a drop-in day centre for those who struggle to make ends meet because of such problems as mental illness, homelessness, unemployment, addiction problems or loneliness (Parkdale Activities and Recreation Centre). As an outreach worker at the Centre told me:

“All those people downstairs [in the main communal area for the Centre’s patrons] have a sad story, and problems with landlords are a common thread running through their stories”.

TS: “Have the problems got worse? Have the numbers of people coming to this place gone up in recent years?”

“In a 4 month period in 1999, we saw over 60 new faces at reception. Another problem is that Parkdale is not near any shelters, so on average there are 150 people a day visiting PARC for a meal, somewhere to sleep during the day, somewhere to keep warm, or simply to meet and talk to others. We have advocates, therapists, outreach workers, addiction counsellors, all kinds of people here to talk to those in need. I’ve noticed that the amount of young people has gone up, as has the number of elderly people, families, and new immigrants – the most vulnerable to gentrification, victims of a strong economy if you like. And it’s not just rent - everything is becoming way more expensive, welfare payments are being cut, so these increases in visitation are inevitable, really” (James, interview, 10th April 2001).

James’s words demonstrate something too often neglected in accounts of displacement – struggles between landlord and tenant are not just about rent for the tenant. Displacement does result from an inability to pay increasing rents, yet this inability comes in large measure from having to spend whatever monthly income a low-income tenant has on other essentials such as food, clothing, transportation,

dependent children, and so on. Possibly unbeknown to a landlord, a tenant may be unable to make rent not because of carelessness with their finances, but because of considerable financial pressures elsewhere. The cost of living in both Toronto and New York City continues to rise at a time when welfare payments are reduced or remain static – a recipe for disaster which is compounded by gentrification, and especially so by unsympathetic landlords. It is difficult to overestimate the profound difficulties facing low-income tenants in these gentrifying neighbourhoods, and equally difficult to downplay the very serious implications of displacement in two political climates which exhibit many similarities in continuing to prioritise the interests of the upper middle-classes.

The measurement of residential displacement would allow for a deeper understanding of the geographical scales inherent in this outcome of gentrification, but measurement was beyond the scope of this thesis, and indeed something very difficult to undertake (for recent exceptions, by no means unproblematic, see Atkinson, 2000a, 2000b; Freeman and Braconi, 2002). However, if we take the worst-case scenario for the displaced, homelessness, we can hypothesize an interplay between the local, national and global scales of gentrification. National and global forces behind gentrification have local outcomes such as displacement and homelessness, but such is the visibility of this outcome that it becomes a national concern – indeed, the federal government of Canada called nationwide homelessness “a national disaster” in 1998, and some scholars have deemed it a pitfall of the global economic restructuring which has affected Canada as much as any other advanced capitalist nation (Layton, 2000; Peressini and MacDonald, 2000). Such a scalar interplay was recognised in a comparative study undertaken by Eade and Mele (1998):

“It is widely assumed that globalisation entails a homogenising process where national and local traditions are overwhelmed by global forces. However, we support those who point to the dynamic interplay between global and local [and national] which may have contradictory consequences” (p.52).

Similar scalar interplay can be seen in the experience of New York City – the Giuliani administration, fuelled by the national prominence of ‘broken windows’

criminology (Kelling and Coles, 1996), has been scandalized by some gentrification researchers for its insensitive treatment and displacement of local marginalized populations in order to prepare entire neighbourhoods for middle-class resettlement (e.g. Smith, 1999, 2001; Curran, 2001). The impact of this administration, however, has gone beyond the national scale, as policymakers in the UK have been attracted to the obvious economic advantages of zero tolerance policing for the purposes of 'sanitising' disinvested inner-city areas (Merrifield, 2000; Atkinson, 2001; MacLeod, 2002). The politics of geographical scale are all too apparent in the spread of Giuliani-style conservatism.

6.1.5 'Social tectonics'

The concept of social tectonics, arising from research undertaken by Butler and Robson (2001; see also Robson and Butler, 2001), is extremely helpful in providing an explanation of the effects of gentrification in South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope. While the latter neighbourhood fits more comfortably into the conceptual grooves laid down by these two authors, South Parkdale's situation is no less tectonic, for I argued that there need not be an absence of social interaction for a tectonic situation to exist. 'Tectonic' arguably becomes an even more striking metaphor in the South Parkdale case, for there is considerable activity at the margins of social plates – social 'shuddering' – when gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers confront each other, as they often do over the ever-present issue of low-income housing in the neighbourhood. In Lower Park Slope, there is less shuddering and more of a 'patchwork quilt' of social plates, so rarely do different social and ethnic groups interact; *perceived* differences fashion the patchwork. Furthermore, the tectonic situation there is reinforced by the costructuring of society and space by class and race, something brought to light by the fact that many respondents focused in on gentrification as something more than just a class-rooted process. In Lower Park Slope, as the Fifth Avenue Committee emphasise so clearly, the process has very worrying implications for a Hispanic community, not just a working class community.

Social tectonics is a highly suggestive conceptual heuristic which offers much explanatory potential for a geographer interested in the changing spatial arrangement

of social classes in the gentrifying inner-city. It is particularly suggestive with respect to the geographical scales of class transformation which lead to a tectonic situation. Devised by Butler and Robson to explain the emergence of (and practices in) heterogeneous middle-class neighbourhoods in London, it offers more than just a window through which we can see the gentrifiers “coming to terms with” a particular city; it also presents opportunities to see how the working-class are forced to come to terms with the gentrifiers. In a recent plenary address to a conference on gentrification in Glasgow, Butler (2002) argued that London is increasingly a “honey-pot”, “not just nationally but also internationally, pulling in people at both ends of the social structure” (p.1). The tectonic structure created by gentrification is not, then, just a local phenomenon – two other scales are operating and interacting with the local, and an uneasy, shifting class structure with a spatial expression is emerging. The same could be said for both Toronto and New York, honey-pots in their own right with powerful ‘pull’ factors nationally and internationally, and the tectonic gentrifying neighbourhoods in each city are a consequence of burgeoning middle-class pull factors drawing in a new class of resident into areas which have long been working class in composition and character. This is now a highly developed process in both cities, and both South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope represent its final stage – not as ‘desirable’ as other gentrified areas, they are gentrifying because the middle-classes are priced out of many other areas, yet it must be emphasised that it is still very much a choice for the middle-classes to live there. This is not the case for the working classes – for the most part, they have nowhere else to go, and are forced to come to terms with a tectonic situation created by the influx of new neighbours.

6.1.6 Some ‘improvement’ was necessary, but not in the form of gentrification

In a discipline which leans largely towards the left, any scholar making a defence of gentrification is likely to encounter considerable hostility. Gentrification, the middle-classes, and particularly the policy fortresses which encourage them have been demonised in similar fashion by leftist scholars time and time again (part of the reason for the emergence of the revanchist city discourse), yet to sit at one end of the scale in a totalising dismissal of gentrification as a universal wrong (e.g. Smith, 1996; Betancur, 2002) is to obscure key questions of what could or should happen to

neighbourhoods which are trapped in a trough of disinvestment and all the socio-economic misery which accompanies it. A final similarity between these two neighbourhoods, and by no means an inconsequential one, is the fact that some form of humane, inclusive improvement to the conditions of each place was - and in many ways still is - sorely needed. This is in no way to suggest that gentrification is the answer, and it should be clear by now that I see the process largely as a serious injustice which simply widens inequalities between different social classes. However, I do not think it politically or theoretically sensible to present an account of gentrification as an injustice without some recognition that the status quo of each neighbourhood *before* gentrification was unacceptable. I refrain from being so arrogant or naïve as to offer some proposals towards an alternative to gentrification in each place, but having completed this research I am struck by something captured by Squires (1992) - "the importance of distinguishing between gentrification and reinvestment that assists low- and moderate-income residents and communities" (p.21).

Both South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope had been suffering from sustained systematic disinvestment before gentrification dug in its claws, and in the case of the former, the situation was particularly bleak in the absence of residents with political clout or collective organisation to improve the economic outlook for the neighbourhood. While it appears that there was a sense of community in both neighbourhoods before gentrification (in the form of the service-dependent ghetto as coping mechanism in South Parkdale, and a strong Hispanic community built around shared religious beliefs and cultural practices in Lower Park Slope), each place was traumatised by problems associated with drug addiction and prostitution, abandonment and arson, and a deeply damaging discourse of decline which discouraged concern from outside and blocked the type of community-oriented reinvestment required. With gentrification, the reinvestment that is flowing in is geared mostly towards the middle-classes, the gentrifiers, and not towards those who have been there for generations. This is the fuel that fires the latent rage of the Fifth Avenue Committee in Lower Park Slope, and fosters a sense of continued frustration among the few community figureheads in South Parkdale, as exemplified by my liaisons with the staff at the Parkdale Activities and Recreation Centre. Both of these case studies demonstrate the future need for community organisers *and* scholars

(and, we would hope, policy makers) to recognise the preconditions for gentrification, the scalar politics so influential in its emergence, and intercept the forces which drive it. This is easier said than done in the firing line of neoliberal urbanism, but something too often submerged in the angular attacks on gentrification in much of the literature, particularly the American literature.

6.2 Differences - South Parkdale

6.2.1 The legacy of deinstitutionalization and the rooming house/bachelorette building conflict

In Chapter 4 I argued that no account of South Parkdale's gentrification can be complete without attention to the history of deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients (and the rooming houses and bachelorette buildings which house them), and this is perhaps the most obvious difference between my two case studies. Deinstitutionalization is the major frame of reference for 'municipally-managed gentrification' - the attempts by the City of Toronto to 'revitalize' the neighbourhood and encourage more families to form a demographically 'rebalanced' Parkdale Village. The preponderance of mentally ill single persons living in small rental dwellings is seen by the City as the principal problem facing South Parkdale, and is the reason it has been left behind by the widespread gentrification visible in the central city since the 1970s. The story of deinstitutionalization in South Parkdale is complex and upsetting, and gentrification is looking increasingly like the next chapter of hardship for 'psychiatric survivors' with little or no aftercare services or appropriate accommodation options. South Parkdale continues to perform a vital function for patients discharged from the Queen Street Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – it is one of the few areas of the city with a drop-in centre for the destitute, dedicated outreach workers, shops and services that are affordable relative to elsewhere in the central city, and above all, a large number of rooming houses and bachelorette buildings that constitute the bottom rung of the housing ladder before shelters and the street. Rooming houses and bachelorettes have been disappearing across the city since the mid-1980s, and in recent years have been decreasing in number in South Parkdale because of deconversion through gentrification. The long-established and unresolved conflict over low-income housing has been intensified with the acceleration of gentrification, as expressed in the wildly divergent

perspectives on the necessity of such housing between on one side, low-income residents and tenant advocates, and on the other, unsympathetic landlords, many of the neighbourhood's middle-class homeowners (gentrifiers), and the City of Toronto's Parkdale Pilot Project.

Deinstitutionalization was a national policy, but most intensely implemented in Ontario by a Provincial government with an appalling lack of understanding of (or even care for) the nature, management and treatment of mental illness. This is of course an issue that has seen a vast amount of scholarly attention across a wide range of social science and medical disciplines, and in geography the pathbreaking work of Michael Dear, Martin Taylor and Jennifer Wolch has laid a solid foundation for deeper considerations of the socio-spatial implications of deinstitutionalization. A national policy, with control given to regions (provinces), had dire local consequences because of gross crisis mismanagement, lack of foresight, the associated retreat of the Welfare State, and a city with a highly uneven residential geography which saw discharged patients congregate in a select few neighbourhoods, and hardly at all in others. With the gentrification of South Parkdale, a local space has once again become a regional and national space, particularly in the federally-funded attempts of the Parkdale Village Business Improvement Association to undo the damage done by two decades of deinstitutionalization by reclaiming it as 'Parkdale Village, 1879' and facilitating the flow of artists into the community. The global scale is never far from the direction policymakers envisage for South Parkdale – the neighbourhood and its mentally ill inhabitants have long been an embarrassment to the City, a thorn in the attempts to flesh out a 'world city' image and attract international interest. This is more than evident in the current debate over what to do with Toronto's decaying waterfront (TWRTF, 2000) and some have even suggested that the Gardiner Expressway should be taken down and rebuilt as a tunnel under the city, returning South Parkdale to its bedrock amenity of Lake Ontario. The tacit aim, as one resident suggested, profoundly exposes South Parkdale as a global space:

"If they do bury the Gardiner, I fear for Parkdale even more than I do know. That would open it up to so much foreign investment like you see all over downtown right now. Imagine it – a waterfront full of stores, attractions, tourists – it would become like a Toronto heritage museum, Sunnyside

Amusement Park Mark 2, and more people would move here. You can't have mentally ill people in South Parkdale for that to happen, they would have to be swept away and dumped somewhere else. I'm amazed City Hall haven't given it more thought, it's totally unlike them to pass up on more of this 'world city' crap!" (John, interview, 28th June 2001)

Deinstitutionalization, then, inherently wound up with local and national scalar politics, may well become an issue intertwined with the global scale as gentrification proceeds.

6.2.2 The City and Provincial government policy contradictions which facilitate gentrification

The South Parkdale case also illustrates a defining feature of urban change and conflict in Toronto, and indeed many other Canadian cities - the apparently contradictory aims and motivations of the City and Provincial governments concerning the current policy on rooming houses and bachelorettes. There is no need for a complete rehash of these contradictions; in sum, the former maintain they are not attempting to 'dehouse' low-income tenants (which becomes highly questionable when scrutinising the series of planning proposals for South Parkdale), but the latter are facilitating this dehousing with tenant legislation that has 'reaped absolute havoc' (as the community legal worker quoted on page 165 put it) on low-income tenants in the neighbourhood. The Parkdale Pilot Project (PPP) cannot be considered as a sensible attempt to improve the housing conditions for low-income tenants if a landlord can still apply to the province for an above-guideline rent increase once housing improvements under the PPP are completed. Whatever the motivation and ideology of both levels of government, I am convinced – as are several community organisers in the neighbourhood – that the policies of both levels of government are contributing to the desired rebalance of the 'unhealthy' demographics of South Parkdale.

As the state is clearly playing a key role in the advance of gentrification into South Parkdale, some comments are required concerning where this research fits into recent scholarly musings on the renewed role of the state in post-recession gentrification (e.g. Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Hackworth and Smith, 2001, Smith, 2002a, Lees, 2003a). Some of the earliest geographical scholarship into

gentrification identified the state as instrumental in the renovation of dilapidated central city residences (Hamnett, 1973) yet its role in the 1980s, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Badcock and Ulrich-Cloher, 1981; Cybrisky, Ley and Western, 1986; A. Smith, 1989), retreated in favour of private sector, market-led reinvestment in neighbourhoods once the earlier economic risks of gentrification had subsided. In the post-recession era, we have seen the return of active state involvement as gentrification has expanded away from its traditional areas: “the state shift towards a more openly supportive role in gentrification has helped facilitate a rapid expansion of the process during the third-wave” (Hackworth and Smith, 2001, p.470). However, much of this new work on the state remains weak with respect to geographical scale – either generalised into an economically reductionist, American-centric example of ‘post-Keynesian governance’ (Hackworth, 2002) or subsumed under a narrow, equally generalised polemic on global urban regeneration strategies (Smith, 2002b).

In a paper which (judging by its infrequent citation) seems to have become a victim of the time it was written, when wide scholarly interest in gentrification was subsiding, Adrian Smith (1989) argued that “work on gentrification has often failed to provide a rigorous conceptualisation and analysis of the role of the state” (p.233) and used the example of the restructuring of London’s Docklands to demonstrate that “by attempting to alleviate specific localised contradictions, local state policies may directly contradict those of the central state” (p.237). While this argument cannot be deported entirely from the London-UK state nexus (as the author recognises), it is remarkably similar to the city-province contradiction in South Parkdale, where discounting its tacit aims, the (local) PPP appears to be alarmingly at odds with the (more centralised) Provincial government’s Tenant Protection Act. If the PPP appears a way of keeping low-income tenants in (improved) housing and rents affordable, that is certainly not the ethos of the Provincial government’s approach towards rental housing. There is thus a striking parallel with the Dockland’s experience:

“[Local and central] state investment...makes the investment of private capital an attractive option in a location where potential rent levels may have been considered too low to warrant such action in the past” (ibid. p.248).

The author argued for a more 'geographical' interpretation of the 'state', particularly with respect to its local and central (national) apparatus in the context of global economic restructuring – an argument to which my South Parkdale research would appear to offer much empirical support.

6.2.3 The lack of organised resistance to gentrification

It is perhaps something of a surprise, given the tendency of something so visible as gentrification to trigger some form of working-class protest, that South Parkdale lacks a neighbourhood-based campaign of organised resistance to the changes currently occurring on its streets. While there are community groups who offer support and advice to low-income residents on a range of domestic affairs, particularly in the form of resolving landlord-tenant conflicts, there is no organisation specifically involved in a challenge to gentrification per se. Sporadic protests in the past have taken place under the auspices of larger, anti-capitalist groups such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, or the Parkdale Common Front (a collective of local groups whose main concern is the eradication of poverty rather than the eradication of gentrification). It is no easy task to explain this absence of community organising against gentrification – it may have something to do with the neighbourhood's unique historical conditions, the absence of effective individual leadership, the notable absence of the term 'gentrification' from the popular lexicon of Toronto life, a lack of earlier resistance to the process in Toronto, and a lack of public and private funding available for the establishment of such an organisation. In an excellent paper comparing community organising between United States and Canada, Stoecker and Vakil (2000) comment on the "lack of literature on urban or community-level mobilization in Canada"⁶⁰ (p.442) and suggest that this is a consequence of the difficulties facing Canadian community organisers to mount a militant, radical and reformist 'urban social movement'-type challenge to social injustice that we frequently see in the United States. These difficulties are largely due to the multi-tiered political structure of Canada, and here we can see the salience of the phrase 'politics of scale', for "'fighting city hall' is often insufficient as many important local decisions also involve the provincial government" (ibid. p.442).

⁶⁰ For exceptions (from Vancouver), see Hasson and Ley (1994) and Sommers (1998).

These authors, however, are not entirely without optimism. They conclude in a very upbeat manner about Canadian community organizing:

“Canadian political culture, with its emphasis on multilingualism and minority rights, is much more likely to accept organized community groups as legitimate political participants. In addition, the historical culture of the Canadian welfare state has been one that responds to community needs” (p.454).

I wish I could share their optimism, but the reasons for my reticence can be found earlier in their article:

“in 1994, the Progressive Conservative (PC) party won the Ontario Provincial election. With its right-wing approach to social policy, the PC government has terminated many social programs....with many important pieces of legislation being passed with little or no public consultation or input” (p.450).

The work of Keil (2000, 2002) and Kipfer and Keil (2002) has rightly exposed this Provincial government as a neoliberal monster with little concern for anything that does not conform to its own agenda. As the working class of South Parkdale are simply irrelevant to the middle-class oriented, suburban ideology of the ‘common sense revolution’ at the heart of its policy prescriptions (see Keil, 2002), it is going to be a tremendous challenge for any kind of funded, organised resistance to gentrification to emerge in the neighbourhood. While the City of Toronto may see community groups as “legitimate political participants”, the track record of the current Provincial government shows that one is only allowed to participate so long as one fits into their political praxis. Given the fact that Stoecker and Vakil point to “the growing powers demanded by the provinces, [and thus] the federal government has been weakened” (p.442), it is difficult to picture any kind of successful challenge to neoliberal hegemony in the near future, for there is more than just a City government to challenge. Even though administrative responsibility for the amalgamated Toronto region was downloaded to the City by the Province in 1996, the Province retain the most influence and power in actual decision-making concerning the fate of the city, and thus any burgeoning community group in the future must confront these awkward, contradictory scales of influence when considering a challenge to gentrification. It is, quite simply, an awesome task.

6.3 Differences - Lower Park Slope

6.3.1 The displacement of working-class Hispanic tenants

Earlier, when discussing the displacement of working-class tenants common to both case studies, I deliberately omitted a key difference, for it is the displacement of working-class *Hispanic* tenants that distinguishes Lower Park Slope from South Parkdale. It is a long-established scholarly rumination, almost always substantiated by empirical research, that race and ethnicity are major factors in the socio-spatial composition of American cities, much more so than in many other Western countries, and therefore it comes as no surprise that we can see how these factors are intertwined with another major factor, class, when considering the effects of gentrification in Lower Park Slope. This is without doubt a complex and sensitive issue, and the explanatory task is not helped by the notable absence of similar discussions in the gentrification literature. As the literature shows, theorising gentrification has been difficult enough without throwing in the additional factors of race and ethnicity! As this study has been concerned with other, equally pressing overarching issues, it is something of a frustration that I have no space to develop a more detailed account of what I feel is a very significant difference to have been illuminated by this comparison.

As I became more familiar with Lower Park Slope, I was struck by its much stronger sense of community than that of South Parkdale, and moreover it seemed as if this community was built on the foundation of its working-class Hispanic residents. However, as I revealed in Chapter 5, many of the neighbourhood's Hispanic residents spoke of a weaker sense of community than in previous decades, and either implied or explicitly stated that gentrification was the reason behind this weakening. Both interviews and action research helped me to view the social tensions which arise when the stability of a community distinguished by one particular class and one particular race is placed under threat by a different class and different race of resident (middle-class non-Hispanic whites) who are more able to pay the escalating costs of living in the neighbourhood. Displacement thus becomes a question of class *and* race, and as the latter category is a tremendously powerful social construction in

the United States (arguably much more so than class), it becomes the pivotal point around which the fortunes of the neighbourhood and its residents are played out. As a key interviewee put it, with reference to the racial tensions which dominated urban life in America in the 1960s, “gentrification kind of brings up those tensions again, and makes race an issue again” (quoted on page 205). This is undoubtedly the case, and words which encourage us to view gentrification and displacement in Lower Park Slope as unwelcome instigators of both class and racial transformation. It is with this in mind that I am troubled by the words of Lance Freeman (2002) in his recent quantitative study of displacement in New York City:

“Although the rhetoric of resistance sometimes expresses class and racial resentments, the principle concern is usually that lower-income households are vulnerable to displacement from redevelopment projects or rising rents” (p.3).

This is not the case in Lower Park Slope - the principle concerns are class and racial transformation (rather than integration) and the threat to a community, and lower-income households are defined by their membership of one particular class and race, so *displacement cannot be just a question of income*. Freeman goes on to say:

“Given the government’s shameful history of trying to maintain the ‘character’ of neighbourhoods, usually by keeping nonwhites out, it would probably be best for public policy to refrain from wading into this minefield. Nevertheless, policy makers could act to preserve buildings and institutions meaningfully associated with the pre-gentrifying character of the neighbourhood” (p.24).

This is alarmingly defeatist, and an unhelpful analogy to apply to gentrifying neighbourhoods, for in Lower Park Slope the issue to be tackled for so many concerned about gentrification is to keep *whites* out! Public policy, in the eyes of many Hispanics and the Fifth Avenue Committee, has a responsibility to join forces with community organisations and maintain the Hispanic character of the neighbourhood. It certainly is a ‘minefield’, and one to approach with caution, but not one that should not be negotiated. The pre-gentrifying character of Lower Park Slope is not just about ‘buildings and institutions’, as Freeman would have us believe. It is about a particular class, race, and community articulated under interlocking geographical scales. Swyngedouw (1997) has argued that

“[t]he role, importance, and position of each geographical scale results from the dynamics of sociospatial transformations. The role of particular geographical scales, their articulation and interpenetration, has to be theorized...and reconstructed as the result of the dynamics of socialspatial relations” (p.144).

In Lower Park Slope, class, race and community are national ideologies that are contested at a local level, always with the backdrop of global economic restructuring, and gentrification is the sociospatial transformation which merges with these ideologies and determines the role, importance, and position of each geographical scale flowing through place. This might seem a little complicated, so the words of Delaney and Leitner (1997) on the ontology of geographical scale serve to clarify my argument:

“Scale is not as easily objectified [sic] as two-dimensional territorial space, such as state borders. We cannot touch it or take a picture of it. Likewise scale exists not simply in the eye or political consciousness of the beholder. *Where scale emerges is in the fusion of ideologies and practices*” (p.97, emphasis added).

In short, the ideologies of class and race combine with the ‘practice’ of gentrification to illuminate the local, national and global scales at which urban space is reconfigured and contested.

6.3.2 Active resistance to gentrification in the form of community organising

Stoecker and Vakil (2000) are doubtless correct to argue that, in contrast to Canada, “the United States has a well-developed culture of community organizing” (p.440), and this culture was particularly evident in Lower Park Slope when observing the practices of the Fifth Avenue Committee. Immediately, then, the national scale of protest is very clear – the Fifth Avenue Committee reflect a national tradition of community organising in inner cities, and in their overt demonstrations, picketing of landlords’ businesses, frequent neighbourhood meetings, and chants of ‘save our community’, they are clearly influenced by earlier urban social movements across the nation. Furthermore, where South Parkdale had no organisation explicitly concerned with resisting gentrification, Lower Park Slope’s identity outside its borders is to a considerable degree being shaped by resistance within its borders, for

the Fifth Avenue Committee have acquired a citywide audience in their vocal attempts to curb gentrification, and are known elsewhere as stalwarts of community organising in New York City. Gentrification is a much more pertinent political issue in New York than in Toronto, and community organising to resist gentrification is prevalent because people know all about gentrification, and what it does to neighbourhoods, and thus rallying around to stop it gathers a more sympathetic audience. In contrast to academic speculation that resistance to gentrification is petering out (Wilson and Grammenos, 2000; Hackworth and Smith, 2001), the Fifth Avenue Committee appears to be going from strength to strength. While I agree with Neil Smith (2002a) that resistance to gentrification is no longer undertaken by “myriad homeless, squatting, housing, and other anti-gentrification movements and organizations” (p.442), it would be erroneous to argue that resistance has completely disintegrated. Because of the threats to local autonomy imposed by Giuliani conservatism, resistance has changed strategy and become more institutionalised, incorporating middle-class activists as well as the working-class into a few well-established community groups. While protests have become less militant and less spontaneous, organised demonstrations are still very effective in raising awareness of the problem, particularly when they receive extensive media coverage. With the departure of Giuliani, there is no longer a right-wing hawk buttressed by a ‘zero-tolerance’ police force trying to reclaim the city for the affluent, but rather the relentless march of neo-liberal policies towards the city which are conducive to continued gentrification and displacement.

In the tactics of resistance to gentrification we can see how a local space is not constitutive of just local processes. At first glance, the Displacement Free Zone might seem a highly localised campaign to prevent the displacement of low-income tenants from the neighbourhood, but political claims to place established at the local scale are not at all exclusive to the local scale, and in fact stretch far from it. By highlighting the harmful effects of landlords raising rents to impossible levels, an action contingent on the activities of globally-linked real estate brokers with outposts in the neighbourhood, the Fifth Avenue Committee make it very clear that there are forces outside its jurisdiction that have very tangible and worrying implications for low-income tenants and families within its jurisdiction. The FAC are particularly opposed to anyone who buys property in the neighbourhood, charges high rents to

tenants, yet does not live in the neighbourhood, thus profiting economically but not socially from its residential character. The real 'enemies' in their eyes are *not from or in Lower Park Slope*, and their literature and campaigning gives a sense that they want to draw a 'moral boundary' around the neighbourhood, sealing it off from immoral greedy speculation and profiteering elsewhere. But the moral boundary does not prevent its message from being disseminated; as I mentioned in Chapter 5, the Displacement Free Zone is attracting attention from other community organisations in New York City, and since I put a link to the FAC's website on my gentrification website, I have received many e-mails from interested community organisers and academics across the continent. As I argued earlier in this chapter, it remains to be seen how influential the tactics of the FAC will be, and expanding their sphere of influence will depend a great deal on their ability to target successfully the real estate groups so instrumental in the neighbourhood's gentrification.

6.3.3 The significant influence of the real estate industry on gentrification

A final feature which distinguishes Lower Park Slope from South Parkdale has already been touched upon several times in this chapter (thus demonstrating its importance), and this is the much larger influence of the real estate industry in the process of gentrification. This is not a hidden feature – walking around Lower Park Slope, and indeed gentrified Park Slope further up the hill, one is struck immediately by the sheer number of real estate brokers who have set up shop in the neighbourhood, many of which have done so in the last five years. Very few are independent businesses, and most are powerful citywide or nationwide outlets with strong international ties, and very much linked to the fortunes of the stock market. Little more needs to be said on their connections to gentrification, and one should never downplay the remarkable effect they have had on the neighbourhood. They continue to change its economic and social character, making massive profits whilst low-income tenants scramble around trying to find somewhere else to live once they receive notice of a rent increase, and as realtors are to a great extent responsible for removing Lower Park Slope's affordable housing stock, one wonders how long this will continue before the whole of Park Slope can be labelled as 'gentrified'. The intertwining of the real estate industry with political decisions made at both the city

and state level is a defining feature of New York City's gentrification (Smith, 1996; Smith and DeFilippis, 1999; Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Supported by government policies on rent which allow landlords considerable license to do as they please, realtors are major players in the seemingly unending drive to return Park Slope to its late 19th century glory.

6.4 'Between nations' - the national scale of gentrification

From this contribution to the geography of gentrification, we can see that notwithstanding broad similarities in both the causes and effects of the process, post-recession gentrification is also differentiated according to contextual factors, and both similarities and differences are illuminated by international comparison from a theoretically inclusive point of departure. It is very important to think of the nature of the word 'international' – it is all too easy to use it as a euphemism for 'global', when it really means and must mean 'between nations'. The failure to take the national scale seriously is certainly logical at a time of rampant globalisation, but this does *not* mean the national scale is somehow unimportant, and to ignore it does not auger well for the project of building a geography of gentrification. It is with this in mind that I turn to a bizarre change of heart - within the same publication - from one major gentrification scholar. In the introduction to *The New Urban Frontier*, Neil Smith (1996) argues that

"While I accept the admonition that radically different experiences of gentrification obtain in different national, regional, urban and even neighbourhood contexts, I would also hold that among these differences a braid of common threads ripples through most experiences of gentrification" (p.xix).

Later in the book, comparing gentrification in three European cities, he argued that

"general differences really do not gel into a sustainable thesis that these [instances of gentrification] are radically different experiences. ...[T]he existence of difference is a different matter from the denial of plausible generalisation. I do not think that it makes sense to dissolve all these experiences into radically different empirical phenomena" (p.185-6).

Why is it that he accepts 'radical differences' in the introduction, but then rejects their existence later on, almost implying that it is nonsensical to draw out such

differences? The answer can be found in his very weak treatment of the national scale, which is also the reason why he rejects Lees's (1994a) empirically substantiated concept of an 'Atlantic Gap' in the process of gentrification, dismissing it as "a false dichotomy" (Smith, 1996, p.185). When Smith talks about Amsterdam, Budapest and Paris, or New York or Philadelphia, so rarely is the national scale *mentioned*, let alone examined, that we are left with a gaping epistemological lacuna in the interlocking local, urban and global scales – the politics of scale inherent in gentrification - which Smith otherwise handles so well. There may indeed be "as much differentiation of the gentrification experience within Europe or North America as between them" (p.185) but that does not mean that there is no significant differentiation between them at all. Between Canada and the United States, in South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope respectively, while similarities are indeed important lessons to be learned in how gentrification operates once preconditions are in place, it actually makes very good sense also to differentiate the empirical evidence, because the differences observed are crucial factors in how gentrification is both experienced and contested. This research demonstrates that it is important to reveal what might be 'plausibly general' *and* 'radically different' between two or more cases of gentrification. While prioritising what is general about gentrification (see Smith, 2002b) reminds us that gentrification is both a theoretically coherent category and a widespread urban phenomenon, it obscures the particularities of gentrifying neighbourhoods in their national contexts which help us to understand the implications of the process.

With South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope now compared, it is time to offer a conclusion which will demonstrate how I fulfilled the aims of this thesis set out in Chapter 2. The national scale will become a central concern in this conclusion as I take onboard the question of 'North American gentrification' and the ways in which the emancipatory and revanchist discourses on gentrification match the experiences of the process in South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope respectively. The end result will provide a contribution to a body of work which has emerged to assess post-recession gentrification, particularly its geography.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSIONS

“In the last fifteen years, urban theory has moved a considerable way towards recognizing the varied and plural nature of urban life. Most of the major contemporary urbanists....acknowledge the inadequacy of one positionality on the city. They note the juxtaposition of high-value added activities with new kinds of informed activity, the co-presence of different classes, social groups, ethnicities and cultures, the stark contrast between riches and creativity and abject poverty, and the multiple temporalities and spatialities of different urban livelihoods. It is, however, fair to say that while they get to the complex spirit of the urban, *the tendency to generalize from prevalent phenomena or driving processes remains strong*” (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p.8, emphasis added).

I feel a strong sense of hesitation when starting to write a set of conclusions to this work, because the project of building a geography of gentrification is only in its infancy, and thus it seems wildly inappropriate to round things off at this stage with a set of finalised, concrete arguments. Furthermore, space set aside for some conclusions carries with it the temptation to generalise about gentrification, setting in motion an ugly set of travelling theories from the contextually-rooted empirical evidence I collected, with declamatory statements such as “we can see that gentrification is.....” and “it is clear that gentrification must be viewed as.....” serving to flatten out the highly uneven geography of gentrification that previous research, when viewed as a collective, suggests. However, a concluding section offers an irresistible opportunity to demonstrate the importance of a geography of gentrification in moving beyond the gentrification debates of old, and to reveal the usefulness of this contribution to what (at the time of writing) is becoming something of a revived field of inquiry, and judging by the responses to my website on gentrification, a matter of growing public concern⁶¹.

At the end of Chapter 2 I set out two aims of this research – first, to contribute to a geography of gentrification by undertaking an international comparison of two gentrifying neighbourhoods, which in turn would facilitate a contribution to the debate over ‘continentalism’ and whether we can refer to ‘North American

⁶¹ In late November 2002, I added a ‘hits’ counter to this website, and it received over 100 hits in less than five days. In addition, I continue to receive e-mails from non-academic sources asking for information, demonstrating the significance of gentrification in urban lives and the need for continued academic work.

gentrification' (whilst being sensitive to scale); and second, to consider how far the discourses on gentrification which have emerged from each context (the emancipatory city discourse from Toronto, and the revanchist city discourse from New York City) reflect what is happening to the geographies of one gentrifying neighbourhood in each city, in an effort to assess the extent to which gentrification may or may not have changed since these discourses were produced and articulated. While there are, of course, many strong links between these two aims, for the purposes of clarity it is necessary to conclude this thesis with a discussion of the outcomes of each aim in turn, before rounding off this undertaking (but not the agenda it has presented) with some remarks on the conceptual, epistemological and political offerings to the gentrification literature made by this research.

7.1 'Continentalism' in question: a North American model of gentrification?

When one reflects on the lack of international comparisons of gentrification, any conclusions which refer to a North American pattern are highly questionable. This was the motivation behind a recently published attempt to set out a new direction for gentrification research, where I argued the following:

"[D]ifferent perspectives and discourses on gentrification exist because they are constructed from observations of different urban contexts. ...[I]t is hard to think of more convincing support for Goldberg and Mercer's belief that the North American City is a myth when we consider the urban context, and compare [Neil] Smith's New York with that of [Jon] Caulfield's Toronto or [David] Ley's Vancouver. Caulfield and Ley's perspective serves to render problematic any attempt by researchers of American cities to claim that the conditions and forms of gentrification are applicable outside their area of study" (Slater, 2002a, p.145).

However, there are two serious problems with this argument: first, I should have added "and vice versa" to the end of that last sentence, for Canadian researchers are as guilty as their American counterparts in the practice of generalising their arguments into a totalising description of gentrification patterns everywhere; and second, more significantly, at the time I wrote that paper I was not aided by the empirical research into gentrification presented in this thesis, and I see now that I overstated the case with respect to my unequivocal support for Goldberg and Mercer's (1986) conclusions. With the simplistic assertion that Neil Smith versus

Jon Caulfield and David Ley equals ‘no such thing as North American gentrification’, I have effectively contradicted myself with respect to my call, in the article, for a geography of gentrification that is sensitive to scale and context and avoids overgeneralisation. While I would still maintain the general thrust of my article, I now understand that it requires a far more wide-ranging assessment of gentrification between many Canadian and American cities to answer the question of whether there is such a thing as a North American model, and simply looking at Smith, Caulfield and Ley’s work is not convincing support for Goldberg and Mercer at all!

This rather harsh auto-critique is necessary here because I want to make it very clear that I cannot offer a simple yes or no answer to the question “Is there such a thing as North American gentrification?”, and that this question can only be answered when the geography of gentrification is developed further. Comparing South Parkdale with Lower Park Slope does not provide nearly enough evidence to endorse or refute the continentalist claims in the gentrification literature (e.g. Cybriwsky et al, 1986; Smith, 1996; Yeates, 1998; Wyly and Hammel, 2001), yet I am convinced that further comparative work on the gentrification of American and Canadian neighbourhoods, whether qualitative, quantitative or both, can lead us in the right direction. Such comparisons require a theoretically-inclusive approach – they should be as much about Smith as they are about Ley, as much about production, supply, economics and structural Marxism as they are about consumption, demand, culture and liberal humanism. I am now as convinced as ever that the key significance of gentrification is not its empirical magnitude, but its status as a geographical expression of complex, intersecting processes that *transcend* these usual dichotomies of urban scholarship. In addition, as Chapter 6 demonstrated, comparisons should also be as much about similarities as they are about differences, resisting the temptation only to look for the latter in the wake of postmodern sensibilities in urban geography. Yet the question remains – what *have* I contributed to the debate over continentalism, and the existence of ‘North American’ patterns of urbanisation?

The similarities I discussed in Chapter 6 offer some conclusive evidence to side with continentalist perspectives. Some of these similarities are compelling, and together they *suggest* a North American model of gentrification in both cause and effect, but

one cannot confirm such a model just by looking at one neighbourhood in Canada and America. Furthermore, a shrewd eye will find more than just compelling similarities between the two case studies. When we take into account differences, as we must, the suggestion of a North American model is destabilised and loses its empirical credibility. There are quite clearly some equally compelling *national* differences that serve to question a North American model, and send us back towards Goldberg and Mercer's (1986) challenges to continentalism. This immediately leads to an important caveat. The fact that these compelling similarities and differences seem to leave us on a conceptual and epistemological middle-ground with respect to 'North American gentrification' should *not* make us sit on the fence and do nothing, especially when the geography of gentrification remains underexplored. This thesis, an attempt to reveal the specificities of the process in one Canadian and one American neighbourhood, *hints*, yet does not prove, that there are some very significant, overarching processes behind urban transformation in North America that intersect with equally significant national and contextual processes in both Canada and America, and the pace, path and character of gentrification is a consequence of this intersection. An unsympathetic critic would likely view this hint – which arguably throws more 'chaos' onto the gentrification process (Rose, 1984; Beauregard, 1986) - as a threat to the theoretical coherence of the concept of gentrification itself. But might such a critic who has had enough of one-sided explanations of gentrification view this hint as the outcome of an enticing way to answer to the woefully neglected calls for a complementary theoretical perspective? This work shows that the geography of gentrification is illuminated by an assessment of how different theories are manifest in distinctive ways in different contexts at the interlocking scales of neighbourhood activism, municipal policy, federal priorities in housing and urban redevelopment, and global economic restructuring.

7.2 Emancipatory gentrification?

The Chambers Dictionary (1999) tells us that "emancipate" means "to set free from restraint or bondage or disability of any kind". For Jon Caulfield and other Canadian urbanists, the restraint from which the 'marginal' middle-class broke free was "a routine of placeless space and monofunctional instrumentality" (Caulfield, 1989, p.624-5) that characterised suburban life in Canadian cities, and emancipatory

gentrification in a 'reform era' was the result. Drawing on the urban musings of figures such as Marcel Rioux, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Jonathan Raban, Caulfield outlined the attractions of inner-city neighbourhoods:

"Old city places offer difference and freedom, privacy and fantasy, possibilities for carnival.... These are not just matters of philosophical abstraction but, in a carnival sense, ...the force that Benjamin believed was among the most vital stimuli to resistance to domination. 'A big city is an encyclopaedia of sexual possibility,' a characterization to be grasped in its wider sense; the city is 'the place of our meeting with the other'" (ibid. p.625).

Whether or not we agree with the politics and explanations of the architects of the emancipatory discourse, it is vital to understand that their arguments are contextual in terms of both space and time. There is no question of the profound influence of the 1970s and 1980s reform era on Canadian urbanisation, particularly on Toronto's gentrification, but my findings from South Parkdale show that this era is well and truly a chapter of the past. My interviews with a wide range of informants in particular demonstrate that there is now no evidence of any emancipatory potential in gentrification. I do not wish to refute the arguments of Caulfield, David Ley, Damaris Rose and other scholars who discussed the 'critical social practices' of the marginal middle-class, but I do wish to point out that they would be hard pressed to find anything positive to say about the *current* middle-class resettlement of South Parkdale. Post-recession gentrification, largely driven by neoliberal municipal and provincial policy and occurring in a neighbourhood with more than its fair share of low-income hardship and social problems, is not an instigator of social interaction but social tension, leading to the unhappy coincidence of reinvestment and displacement, home improvement and homelessness, renovation and eviction. This 'old city place' may still be one where 'meeting with the other' occurs, but these meetings are rarely positive or liberating encounters because of the tremendous disparities in life chances and living standards, not to mention divergent views on low-income housing, between gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers. The former are arriving in a neighbourhood which is a vital source of low-income housing for deinstitutionalised psychiatric patients and impoverished immigrants to Canada, and while South Parkdale badly needs reinvestment, it does not need it in the form of gentrification. Middle-classes are not welcomed by working-classes, and working-

classes are viewed by middle-classes at best as 'undesirable', at worst as 'wackos' and 'pathetic creatures'. This is not an emancipatory urban process.

Returning to the dictionary definition of "emancipate", there is a striking irony with respect to "set free from...disability of any kind". Even if middle-class resettlement was still an emancipatory social practice, the *outcome* of South Parkdale's gentrification demonstrates that it is anything but emancipatory for those already in the neighbourhood. South Parkdale's disabled people, the deinstitutionalized, are not set free or helped by middle-class resettlement – in fact, they experience another kind of disability in being unable to pay the price of living in the neighbourhood following the devastating rent increases symptomatic of gentrification. The problem with the City of Toronto's Parkdale Pilot Project is that the balance of South Parkdale's housing stock is *already* tipped in favour of bachelorettes and rooming houses that house single-persons, and to make it a 'healthy' neighbourhood with 'a diversity of housing opportunities' for 'families, couples and singles' requires eradicating some bachelorettes and rooming houses and displacing those who inhabit them. It is a sobering thought that the City of Toronto (helped along by Provincial tenant legislation) may be paving the way for a different and more sinister kind of emancipatory practice, one which involves 'liberating' South Parkdale from the ball and chain of deinstitutionalization and low-income housing conversions - a liberation which implies shifting the people and changing the buildings that have defined this neighbourhood for generations.

7.3 Revanchist gentrification?

There can be little doubt, as MacLeod (2002) has pointed out, that Neil Smith's revanchist city thesis is an enticing analytical construct with which to assess contemporary urban class transformation. Smith himself (1999) has argued the following:

"Scandalizing the revanchist city is important if we are to get a clear sense of how the political wind is etching and eroding the urban landscape.It also would be a mistake to confuse repression with revanchism, however much the latter might include the former. Repression may have many rationales, whereas revanchism is about revenge" (p.202-3).

Revenge is a strong word; but is it too strong with respect to Lower Park Slope's current gentrification? I have already discussed at length the problems that arise when generalising about revanchist gentrification (in Chapter 2), so what is required in this conclusion are some empirically-informed comments on whether we can witness revengeful gentrification taking place today in Lower Park Slope.

The work that has produced the revanchist city discourse came overwhelmingly from American city research. A term coined to describe the situation in the Lower East Side of New York, the credibility of revanchism has been bolstered by the insertion of neoliberal urban (particularly housing) policy into the vacuum left by the failure of 1980s liberal urban policy across a number of US cities (Wyly and Hammel, 2001). I do not doubt the existence of revanchism in certain places, and the purpose here is not to deny or downplay its power in the restructuring of urban space in favour of more affluent citizens at the expense of disadvantaged or 'undesirable' populations. I am troubled, however, by the uncritical acceptance of contemporary gentrification as a consummate expression of revanchism and the unsupported assertion that revanchism is a defining feature of all cities undergoing gentrification (Smith, 1996). My action research and interviews in Lower Park Slope suggest that gentrification is not a revanchist attempt by the policy fortress and the white middle-class to take the neighbourhood back from working-class. In a booming housing market that has made many New York neighbourhoods affordable only to the corporate elite (through super-gentrification), middle-classes have fewer options than ever before and many are 'overspill' settlers in this neighbourhood not by choice but by *few other choices*. While theirs is not a predicament anything like that of those who are displaced from the neighbourhood, *it would be a serious misrepresentation* to call their actions unanimously revengeful. It is for this reason that we must be suspicious of the current applicability of Smith's punchy rhetoric. Let us return to a particularly visceral quote:

"The revanchist city is, to be sure, a dual and divided city of wealth and poverty, and it will continue to be so as seemingly apocalyptic visions of urban fissure....appear more and more realistic. But it is more. It is a divided city where the victors are increasingly defensive of their privilege, such as it is, and increasingly vicious defending it" (Smith, 1996, p.227).

I find it interesting that, only a few years after Smith wrote these words, and in the very city from which they came, it is hard to detect any kind of vicious defence of Lower Park Slope by the gentrifiers. Equally as interesting is the fact that many of the supposed 'victors' in the divided city are now so concerned about these ever widening divisions around them that they have begun to show concern about a process in which they are portrayed by Smith and others as the villains. The Fifth Avenue Committee could not operate without its middle-class patronage. If there is any evidence of revanchism, it is most readily found in the actions of some landlords and *especially* some realtors, and always in dialogue with the State legislature in Albany who refuse to tighten the rent regulations in New York City. This power allegiance is as darkly troubling for many middle-class residents as it is for many of their working-class neighbours. In saying this I do not want to paint a rosy picture of gentrification whereby different social classes are residing in Lower Park Slope without any kind of problem – my discussion of social tectonics should be enough evidence to demonstrate otherwise – but I do want to argue that revenge is not an appropriate verb to attach to gentrification in this context. In sum, just as it is important to understand emancipatory gentrification as space and time-specific, the same applies to understanding gentrification as a form of revanchist anti-urbanism.

The absence of revenge in Lower Park Slope should not, however, be taken as evidence that the situation for New York City's low-income tenants is improving. A recent article in *The Observer* points towards proposed policy prescriptions to steer New York away from impending bankruptcy; while not strictly revanchist, they are once again geared towards the haves, not the have-nots:

"The city's deficit for this year stands at \$1.2 billion, but is set to rise by \$6.4 billion in 2003.... [Mayor] Bloomberg's remedy is a pincer movement: an 18 per cent hike in property tax, the biggest in New York's history, offset by a controversial income tax windfall benefiting the rich.... Watchdog groups say the combination of a property levy and tax breaks will be a final eviction order for all but those who can afford to pay the city's soaring rents.... It has....the potential to break up what remains of traditional communities in now over-priced and 'yuppified' neighbourhoods, as landlords break through rent controls to levy vast increases" (Vulliamy, 2002).

This fiscal crisis management is disturbing news for the low-income tenants living in Lower Park Slope, and it is going to make the necessity of the Fifth Avenue

Committee even greater as their organising powers are stretched to their limits. One can only hope that Displacement Free Zones are designated in other neighbourhoods with similar problems, as community groups become the sole champions of low-income rights to the city during the relentless march of neoliberal urbanism.

7.4 The importance of attention to discourses on gentrification

“[T]he challenge is to maintain a grasp of the politics of production, reproduction and consumption while being alert to the poetics of discursive formations” (Jacobs, 1993, p. 833).

When setting out the aims of this thesis in Chapter 2, I argued that the social and political relevance of attention to discourses on gentrification is to throw incisive light upon the enduring question of whether gentrification is a desirable (emancipatory) or objectionable (revanchist) aspect of contemporary urban transformation. The discussion *above of how well my research fits into the* discursive grooves laid down by researchers before me leaves me in an awkward position, because I do not think that gentrification is either emancipatory or revanchist in either case! That said, it is striking that the discourse not usually associated with Canadian city gentrification is arguably strengthened by the South Parkdale case – the middle-class nimbyism and the language and implications of municipally-managed gentrification I discussed are perhaps closer to the thesis of revanchism. Similarly, the discourse not usually associated with American city gentrification is arguably strengthened by the Lower Park Slope case – middle-class participation in activism and the affection for ‘old city’ neighbourhoods are hardly opposed to the central tenets of the emancipatory city thesis. But the point remains – neither case sits comfortably with either discourse, and this is because of the context and contingency of each discourse with respect to space and time. Insofar as gentrification is desirable or objectionable, I think my case studies and my interpretations of them lean towards the latter, but labelling gentrification as revengeful is, I believe, going too far. It would thus seem of paramount importance to follow Butler and Robson’s (2001) mandate that “[g]entrification....cannot in any sense be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined in each case according to its own logic and outcomes” (p.2160). No greater remit for understanding and evaluating gentrification can be given, and I have shown that

placing discourses on gentrification under scrutiny helps us to reject unitary perspectives and view the uneven geography of the process. Furthermore, attention to discourses is crucial because it is not only popular discourses that have material effects - academic discourses affect not only how we understand gentrification but how we address it and ultimately how we use our knowledge to provide a contribution to groups and individuals who are trying to do something about it. It would thus be progressive to follow the lead of Martin (2000) and “examine the connections between discourse and action, by investigating the relationship between dominant and alternative discourses about a place, and the activism of residents within it” (p.402).

7.5 Towards a new direction for gentrification research

It is hoped that this contribution to the geography of gentrification will prove enticing to researchers looking for a way out of what Redfern (1997) called a “theoretical logjam” in gentrification studies. I agree with Smith and DeFilippis (1999) that “the pattern and intensity of post-recession reinvestment in the 1990s suggests an altered relationship between economics, geography and culture in the elixir of gentrification” (p.639), and I hope that this theoretically informed international comparison has gone some way towards explaining this relationship with respect to two particular gentrifying neighbourhoods. We have argued for too long about what is causing gentrification and whether or not it is a significant process, and by emphasizing the importance of a heightened sensitivity to context and geographical scale when researching gentrification in North America, I have shown one way in which the debate over continentalism can be invigorated, and how the gentrification literature can be moved forward in a productive, progressive manner. Reflecting on some of the papers given at a recent conference on gentrification held at the University of Glasgow⁶², it seems that the greatest challenge for researchers interested in the geography of gentrification is overcoming the resilience of old gentrification debates, and the resilience of overgeneralizations, especially as some of the major influential voices in the literature are to a large

⁶² The conference, held from 26th-27th September, was entitled ‘Upward Neighbourhood Trajectories: Gentrification in a New Century’.

extent responsible for such tenacities. Hamnett's paper on the gentrification of inner London was a case in point with respect to old debates:

"Smith's objection to demand led explanations is that they are overly individualistic, place too much stress on shifts in consumer choice and preference, and fail to provide an adequate explanation of underlying changes in the land and property markets.... It is argued here, on the contrary, that a demand based explanation which locates the basis of gentrification demand in the shifts in industrial, occupational and earning structures which have taken place in the move from industrial to post-industrial cities is based on changes in underlying economic and class structures" (Hamnett, 2002, p.4-5).

For such an influential scholar in the field of gentrification, it is something of a disappointment that he appears not to endorse the arguments of several scholars, Smith and Ley included, to view gentrification in terms of supply *and* demand. Yet with respect to overgeneralizations, Smith too is not entirely innocent of masking the geography of gentrification. His conference paper, tellingly entitled 'Gentrification Generalized', included the following argument:

"[T]he post-1990s generalization of gentrification as a global urban strategy came as heir to the abandonment of twentieth century liberal urban policy on the one hand and, on the other,as a consummate urban expression of an emerging neo-liberalism. Much as cities became global....so did some of their defining features" (Smith, 2002b, p.15-16).

I find it frustrating that someone who has taught us so much about gentrification is arguably obscuring the uneven geography of gentrification with these words. The purpose of this rather critical finale is to point out that scholarly ruminations, debate re-visitations and overgeneralizations are happening while gentrification appears to be intensifying, and while government policies on 'regeneration' appear to be utterly unaware of the overwhelmingly critical literature on gentrification summarised so well by Atkinson (2002). I side here with Loretta Lees (2003b) in her forthcoming editorial for *Environment and Planning A*:

"What is the point of substantial, critical and vigorous academic literature on gentrification if it is not actually disseminated to those in a position to influence and make the policies we seek to inform?"

This dissemination will be a problem if we keep arguing amongst ourselves over the explanation of gentrification. Equally problematic is the fact that if we continue to overgeneralise about gentrification, we can only expect generalised policies on regeneration, insensitive to particular local and national conditions of the kind that I described in South Parkdale and Lower Park Slope.

I realise that this discussion runs the risk of reducing the gentrification literature to pathos, so let us end on an optimistic note. We have seen nearly forty years of research into an urban process that is at once fascinating and troubling, and a resultant literature that is theoretically sophisticated and dominated by geographers. With the remarkable resurgence of gentrification in recent years, there can be no better time to develop a geography of gentrification that draws on and enhances this theoretical sophistication in new and exciting ways, and we have a responsibility to communicate this geography to those policymakers and community organisers who have such an impact on the lives of city dwellers. This does not mean that all our research should be policy-oriented, but it does mean that our research should be made intelligible and useful to those beyond academia. This is no easy task, as my experiences with action research showed, but when we consider the voices of people affected by gentrification that I included in this thesis, we can see that it is an urgent task.

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Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9

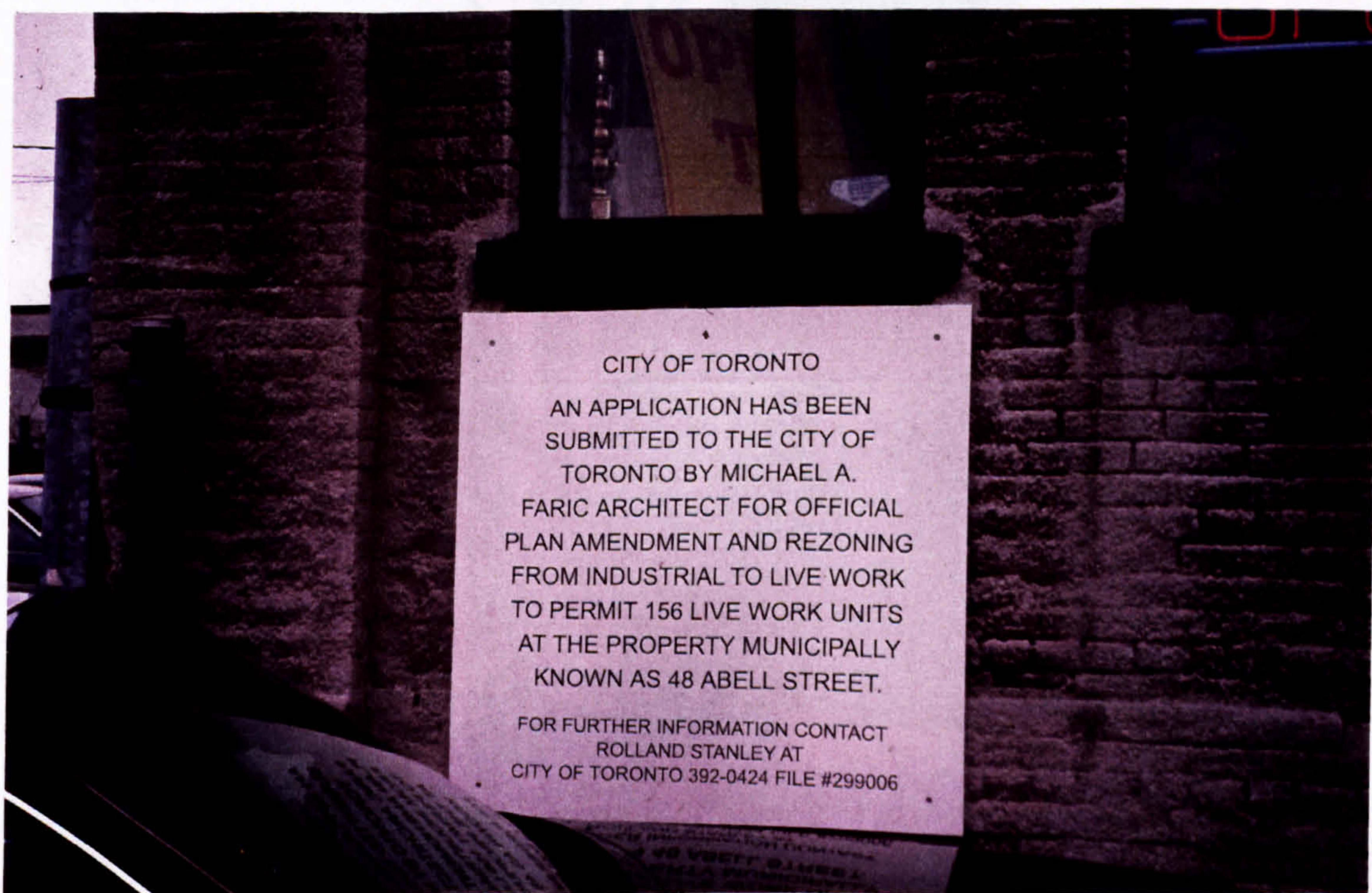


Plate 10



Plate 11 (above)



Plate 12 (right)



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19



Plate 20



Plate 21 (above)



Plate 22 (right)

Plate 23

